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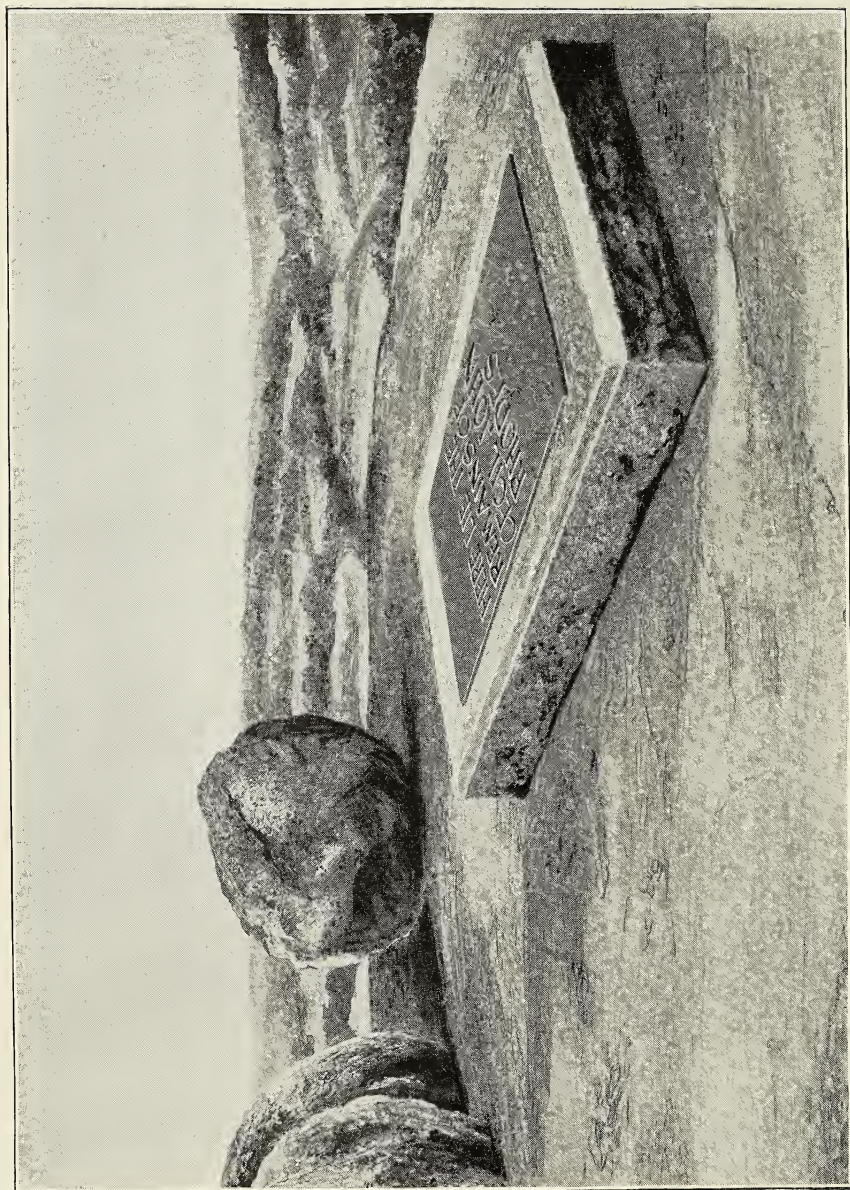
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BRITON BOER AND BLACK



THE RESTING PLACE OF RHODES.
On the Matoppos.

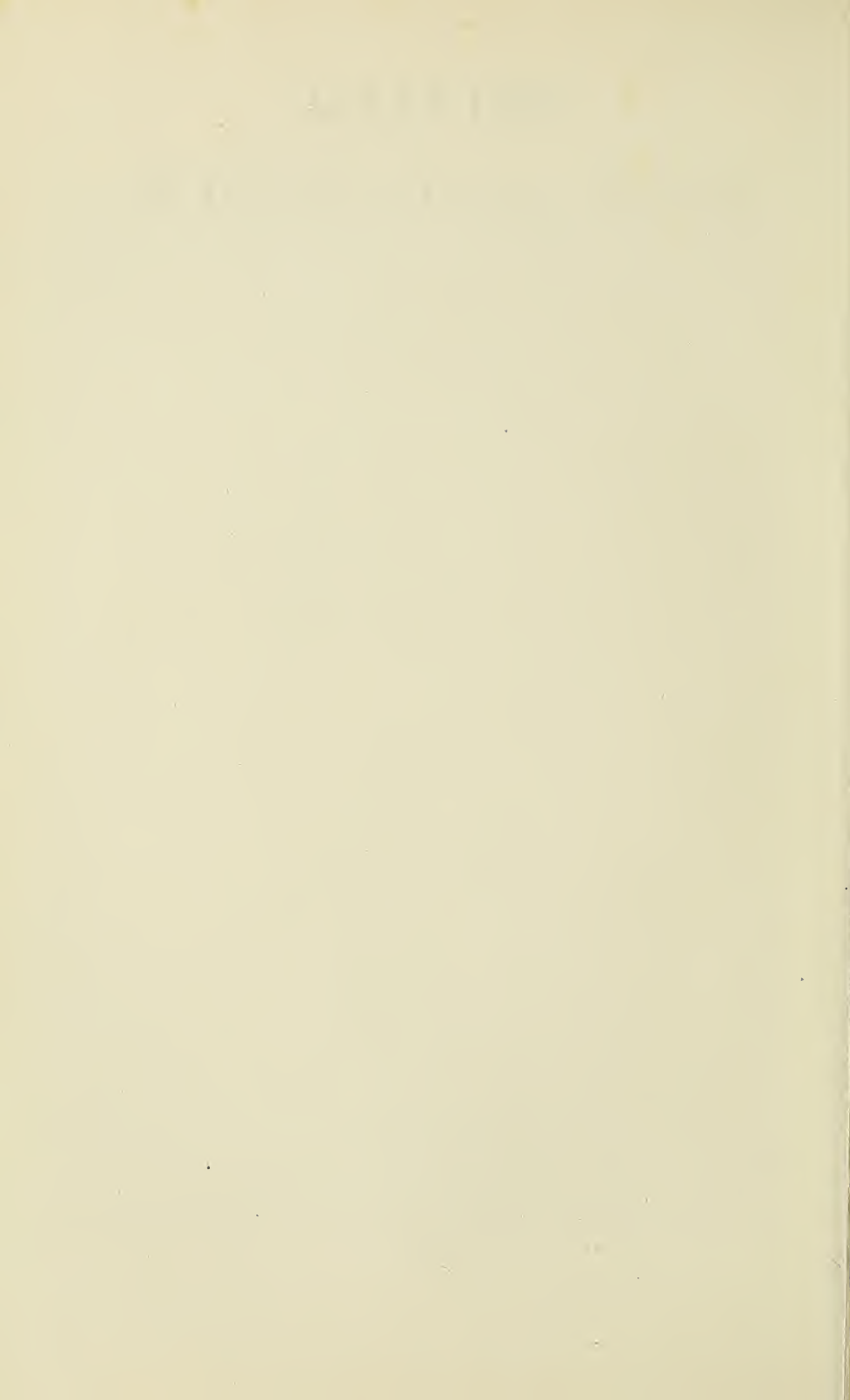
BRITON BOER AND BLACK

OR
TEN YEARS' HUNTING, TRADING
AND PROSPECTING IN
SOUTH AFRICA

BY
CLEMENT HANDLEY

LONDON
T. SEALEY CLARK
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PREFACE

THIS simple and unpretending narrative of travel, trade, and adventure in South Africa may serve the purpose for which the Author has written it, viz., to let the English people understand some of the dangers and difficulties faced by the pioneer in South Africa. It may also help to shed light on the character of the natives both in peace and war, and their commercial and domestic methods, while it should certainly afford considerable insight into the ways of the still little understood Boer. If the British Government and the Colonial authorities are fair and firm in their dealings with the Boers and natives alike, there is no need to despair of the future of South Africa. Weak and irresolute methods and undue interference by the Imperial authorities, as well as ignorant and inflammatory speeches by British politicians, are most dangerous to our supremacy in a country which is already teeming with disaffection among both Boers and Blacks.



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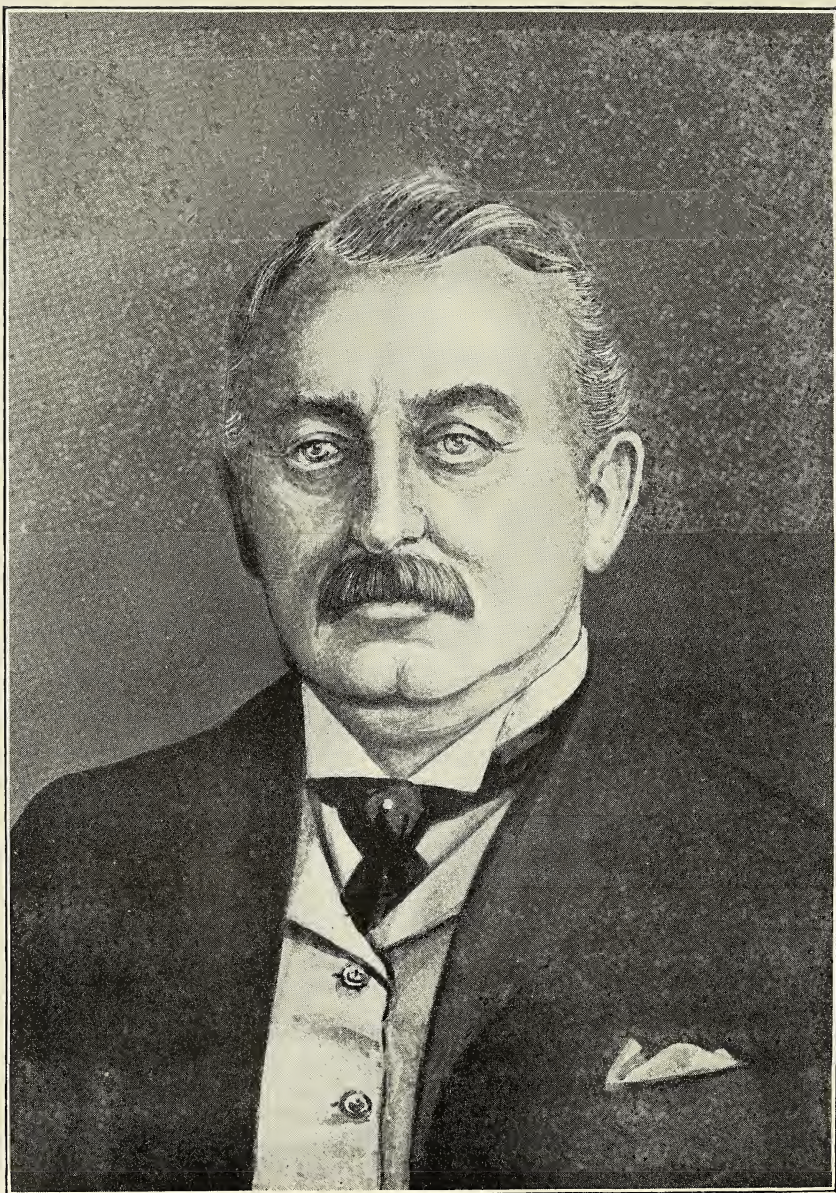
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The Publisher's acknowledgments are due to the Proprietor of "SOUTH AFRICA" for his courteous permission to make a selection from that Journal's unique collection of portraits of well-known South Africans.





THE RT. HON. C. J. RHODES, P.C.

CHAPTER I

AMONG THE "I.D.B'S."

A typical store—The native dandy and an old warrior's lecture—Freedom before fine feathers—Jacobs, the Illicit Diamond Buyer—A Kaffir Stoic—The precious stone—Linsky the confederate—An unexpected encounter—Unwelcome visitors.

IF you could imagine yourself in the Great Diamond City, and peep into one of the many stores in that very busy place, you might have noticed a pale-faced youth, about sixteen years of age, busy serving a queer lot of customers. They were natives from the De Beers Mines—a group of about a dozen, one of whom, although now dressed like a dandy, was, only half an hour ago, as naked as his fellows, that is to say with nothing on but a loin-cloth and a blanket thrown around his shoulders. Listen to their conversation for a moment. Although to an outsider it would sound a hubbub, it was really a serious discussion. They were all "flush" of money, as their waist-belts very plainly showed.

"I suppose you think you look like a chief, with those fine clothes on?" says one of them. "Look at those ugly boots—they must hurt your feet! You know how your brothers and sisters would laugh at you in our home far away in Fingoland, and your mother

and father would not know you in those unnatural clothes! Oh! Why did the white men ever come to our land?—to make us work to find those diamonds which they pride in and value so much. What good are the stones? And we risk our lives far away down in the earth. The white man is not satisfied with the surface of the land, the beautiful sun, the forests, the water that God has given to him, his cattle and goats, the company of his wife. No, he must needs burrow in the earth like a rabbit to look for the rubbish, and forces us to go into the hole with him! We were quite satisfied with the good things that the Spirit had sent us, but the white man interferes; he comes from somewhere across the great river, picks a quarrel with us, and with his fire-eater he kills our fathers and brothers, and, had we not fled to the mountains, he would have slain us as well. Where are our cattle and goats, which were innumerable?" (Here he drew his finger across his mouth, meaning "All gone!") "And for what reason? Why, none other, my brothers, as I swear by my forefathers, than to make us work in the bowels of the earth for him, or else we should starve; yes, like dogs in the desert, as you know. Who shall feed our mothers and sisters, and our young brothers who are not old enough to work yet? Think of my words, oh! you dresser-up-so-finely, my brother—think of the food we must buy on our return journey for our families in our country so far away! Why, you stink of that poison the white man has given you on purpose to make you lose your reason, so that he may become rich from your hard-earned money. Only yesterday, sixteen of our brothers were buried under a great fall of ground in that cursed hole yonder (pointing in the direction of the Kimberley Mines),

and then we all worked until the sweat was dropping from our bodies—yes, we worked! aye, more than oxen do when breaking up new ground to sow our corn—and when we reached them—how many of them shall ever see their chief again? Why, not one man! They were all dead save one, and he will have gone to his fathers ere now. As the oldest man amongst you I give you my advice—it is, buy some shoes, some meal, tobacco, and a pot to cook our food, and let us depart. Take no more of that poison, I pray you, and let us be off, as the day is already far spent.”

So saying, the speaker walked to the door. This long speech was delivered by one of the Kaffirs in the store; a splendidly-built man, as black as charcoal, as strong as a lion, and with magnificent large eyes. He had evidently seen some rough work, and told us so afterwards, showing us an ugly scar on his left side, where he said that the rooibaatsjes (red-jackets) had charged him with long glittering knives on the ends of their guns. He was very proud of it, as the scar showed that he had been struck with his face to the foe, indeed it was the command of his chief that any one returning with a scar on his back should be assegaied at once.

At this juncture one of the assistants came forward, bringing an old soldier's tunic, with shiny buttons and gold braid. It had at one time belonged to a sergeant in the army, and its history was an interesting, perhaps a bloody one—who knows? One of the natives noticed it, and his eyes sparkled.

The assistant saw this, and calling the native on one side, said, “Now, Swartbooi, if five of your number buy clothes like that (pointing to the overdressed native) I will give you this jacket. So now,

talk to your comrades and bring them all down to the end of the shop."

I may here mention that there was no window, consequently the store was always in semi-darkness, and a customer could not detect a flaw in any garment that he wanted to buy, or that was exposed for sale.

A lively discussion soon ensued between Swartbooï and Jan, and all the other natives joined in—in fact, to one not accustomed to natives, a free fight seemed inevitable, as sticks and arms were being waved about. The pale face of the youth behind the counter showed signs of fear, and he retreated into a far corner, only to be jeered at by the other assistants, who understood all that was going on and were laughing to their hearts' content. Swartbooï was using all the influence he could command, for his thoughts were bent on the scarlet jacket. He was evidently a good talker as, slowly, one by one, he seemed to persuade his audience to his views, with the exception of Jan and six others. The seven dissentients declared that if the others wished to do so, they might waste their money on clothes. They themselves were going to start at once for home, stopping only at a certain pool of water outside the town until the moon rose, which would be "a quarter-of-a-sun" (three hours) after dark, and wait for their comrades there. If the others did not come then, they would not wait for them. So saying, Jan and his companions picked up their blankets and the meal they had bought, and started off—not, however, until Swartbooï had given them a few parting remarks.

"Oh, you old fools!" cried he, "who would listen to you? What can you do with the white man's gold in Kaffirland? There are only four stores on

the way, and their prices are four times as great as this man's. Why, before next winter you will be forced to return to the diamond mine to work again, whereas we shall be sitting nice and comfortable with our people and with our barns full of corn. Why can you not even stop for us if you do not wish to buy any goods? You know there are many robbers about these parts waiting for us, as they see we are returning to our native land with our earnings. There are fifteen of us, and together we could guard ourselves and get home safely, but consider the risk of thus splitting up our party."

"Do not talk thus to men; you are but a child, while I have fought in many battles," cried Jan, as he threw back his blanket and proudly exposed the bayonet scar, another which stretched from his hip to his knee, and yet another on his head. "Do you not see these scars?—further words are not needed. I see that you have had some of the white man's beer—your eyes tell me so, and your breath stinks of it. No, I heed not the words of a child; do not bother about us, we are men and can take care of ourselves—can fight with death, if need be."

With this parting shot, Jan and his group filed out of the place, talking very excitedly, gesticulating a great deal, and cursing the white man and his stores. They were stopped several times by touts, who expatiated loudly upon the cheapness of their several masters' goods, but Jan and his companions took no notice of them, and passing out of the town, reached the water-hole a little after sunset. A fire was soon made and fuel collected to keep it going until the moon rose; a pot of porridge was cooked, and afterwards pipes were lit, each one of the party sitting as close to the fire as possible, in a circle. Here we

must leave them for the present, and return to their companions in the store.

Swartbooi put on the tunic and went to a glass to admire himself. He seemed more delighted than ever, and danced, or rather jumped, about like a lunatic, singing a kind of chant to the effect that "No matter how we try to keep the white man's money, he simply calls it and it slips through our fingers." After ten minutes of this performance (in the meantime, and a few more "soupjies"—about a gill—of Cape brandy had been served out, the bottle seeming to appear and disappear at the will of the storekeeper, Mr. Jacobs), the Kaffirs were all in a buying mood, with the exception of one man named Joss, whom Jacobs seemed to have known previously, as he beckoned him to go into another room partitioned off from the rest of the store.

As he was moving towards the door, one of the natives said to him, "Are you going to sneak away like a snake in the grass, as the others have done? Because, if you wish to go, why did you not leave with them? I warn you not to go now, for the sun is down and it will be dark long before you get to the pool. But go, if you wish it, fool that you are!"

At these words, Joss sprang upon him like a tiger, and they were soon struggling upon the floor. Things looked extremely serious for a minute or so, and had not one of the assistants had the presence of mind to fire off in the air a cartridge from a revolver (an article which is always kept handy under the counter), it might have gone badly with one or both. As it was, the assistant sprang between them, and said that the "Baas" wanted to speak privately to Joss about selling him some cattle, and that was the

reason for his going into the room (to which he pointed). With this explanation, and another round of grog, the affair ended.

Joss, followed by Jacobs, went inside, and the door was secured, the blind drawn and the lamp lighted. The room contained a broken bedstead covered with dirty blankets; a packing case for a dressing table, a small penny mirror; another packing case for a washstand and a tin as a washing-basin. The soap stood on the top of the bare box, a few grain bags on the floor took the place of a carpet, the walls were profusely decorated with pictures from the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*, shabby clothes hung about on convenient nails and the window was nailed down so that it could not be opened. The room was pervaded by a strange musty smell, also a strong odour of brandy. This last was explained by the fact that if the bedstead was lifted a little, and the cavity underneath inspected, five or six casks of brandy could be discerned. It was, in fact, a "sly grog-shop."

"Well, Joss," said Jacobs, "have you been successful again this time?"

"You will see, baas," answered Joss; "I have had very hard lines, as they gave me some nasty medicine in the compound and searched me and made me jump about as if I was mad, but they found nothing. Ah! baas, old Joss is too cunning for those white men up yonder (pointing to the mines), and for what I have brought you I want those two young heifers which you showed me two moons ago. I know they are here as I saw them coming from the veldt with your cattle this evening."

Jacobs seemed rather excited, and kept encouraging the man by signs to show him the diamond which of

course he knew he carried. He talked but little, and his eyes gleamed with excitement as the native stood up at his full height, and, dropping his blanket to the floor, said, "Baas, I am in pain, please give me some water or else I shall faint."

Picture to yourself this six foot of humanity, black as ebony, talking of fainting; but it was so. He gulped down a drink of the water that Jacobs gave him, and then sank on his hams again. He asked for a knife, on which Jacobs looked suspicious.

Going first to his bed, and producing therefrom a revolver, the storekeeper said, "Don't play me false, Joss, or you will never leave this room alive." He then threw a small pocket-knife to the native.

At this, Joss sprang up, saying, "Do you mistrust me, white man, after what I have done for you and after the many deals we have had together? I have never before suffered the pain I have this time. I am sure they suspect me at the mines. Don't think to frighten me with that thing," pointing to the revolver; "I am not afraid of anything. If we are to do business as we have done before, let us get to work like friends, or else let me go. I thought I had a man to deal with, not a child. Now I know your true character. I had my suspicions of you, and I tell you from now to be careful. I shall be even with you yet, for you treat me as a dog and a thief. Have I not brought you many diamonds already and always acted as a man? I repeat, white man, for this evening's work you shall repent, I swear it!"

Jacobs shrank back in terror at the last words of this naked, perhaps simple, but at any rate manly savage. He was afraid, for he had a guilty conscience and showed it. Beads of perspiration stood out on his

brow and he trembled from head to foot. In his terror the revolver dropped to the ground, and the noise of the fall seemed to awaken him from the stupor into which he had sunk ; in fact, he was thinking whether the native really meant what he said. If so, supposing he was found with a diamond in his possession, it meant five years' hard labour. Look at the disgrace !

"What a fool I am, to be sure !" he thought. "I said that, after my last transaction with this man, when I made a clear profit of £245, it would be the very last diamond I should buy. At any rate, I must make this my last purchase, for I am pretty sure the detectives are watching me."

Recovering himself with an effort, he turned to the native and said, "Joss, you must not think that there is anything wrong ; I don't mistrust you, but I am getting very nervous. Show me the stone you have brought and let us get the thing settled. If it is a nice sized one, I will give you the two heifers you saw, and a suit of clothes besides, but you must start away directly the moon rises, so out with it at once. I do not see where you can have it, as you are naked and have been well searched, and your blanket as well. You ought to have washed yourself before coming. Look at your legs, how bespattered they are with mud—why, the police could see that you have just come from the mine. Perhaps they watched you come into my store. But, of course, you were not alone, and might not be noticed among so many of your companions."

Joss picked up the pocket-knife which had been thrown to him by Jacobs, and began scraping the mud from his legs. Presently he put down the knife, and with one hand just below the knee and the other

above the ankle, commenced pressing his leg—uttering groans all the while. Suddenly he gave a gasp of relief as a beautiful diamond slipped out from its hiding place, which was *inside the calf of his leg*. The native sat like a statue for fully five minutes. Not a muscle moved; and only his deep breathing could be heard. Even Jacobs could not utter a syllable, and his eyes glared in bewilderment. Here was a native suffering all this pain, aye, and for how many days, and for whose sake and why? Only to make him rich. He was a hero! The incident had touched the man greatly—it had found a soft place even in his hard heart. How was it possible to suspect such a man as Joss? Jacobs sprang forward with a cup of water for the fainting man, and as he retreated picked up the diamond, all smeared as it was with blood and matter, and, dropping it into a tin, poured some water over it. What a beauty! He had only seen one better, and that was in a merchant's window in the Diamond Market. Taking a piece of the bedstead apart, he dropped the stone in and closed it with a “click,” at the same time casting a timid glance around the room.

He had for a time forgotten all about the poor fellow who was lying on the floor, but now, drawing up the blind, he blew out the lamp and called out, “Mr. Curtis, come here at once; get a few yards of calico and bind this fellow's leg up. He has a nasty wound, caused by the pick while working at the mine, I suppose,”—with some stress upon the last words.

Mr. Curtis cast a suspicious glance, first at one and then at the other, and stood still for a few seconds, gazing at the scene in front of him. He saw that his master, who was speaking in quick,

trembling tones, was excited and flushed, while the native was now half lying and half sitting, with a terrible wound in the calf of his leg. He felt inclined to go straight to the police station and give evidence against his master, suspecting as he did that Jacobs was engaged in the I.D.B. (Illicit Diamond Buying) trade, except that should he be caught, he, Curtis, would lose his situation, a position not to be gained very easily. His salary was £25 a month, and he was saving fast. A good, hard-working man, his chief thought was for his *fiancée* at the Cape, and he often told us that it was for her sake that he kept hanging on, as he termed it, until he had sufficient to start for himself. He turned away from the sickening sight with a shudder and a heavy heart, to do his master's bidding. He took a piece of calico from the shelf, and tearing off a long strip went to the medicine chest, from which he took a pot of ointment. Returning to the poor native, he first washed his leg and then squeezed out the matter. Joss stood it stoically, barely a groan escaping him, and when Curtis had finished, he led him out to the back, as the Kaffir wanted to see the cattle that had cost him so dear. Jacobs was already there, and had put the beasts into a separate yard. He merely made a sign to the native, and quickly disappeared into the store again.

Let us also return there. By this time the rest of the natives were in a half-drunken state, dressed in a lot of common, coarse, but gaudy clothing, blankets, and beads. A well-dressed Englishman walked straight into the store, and, pushing the natives on one side, inquired haughtily whether Mr. Jacobs was in. To judge from his manner and

dress he was an important personage in his own estimation.

"I think, sir," said one of the assistants, "he is in his office. Shall I tell him that you wish to see him?"

"Oh no, never mind," said the stranger, and he made his way straight to the office, in other words, the room in which we have seen the first act of the drama. Judging by the unceremonious manner in which he pushed the door open and walked in, he was no stranger. At that very moment Jacobs was tying a strip of dirty rag on the bedstead, to cover the crack, so as the more effectually to conceal the hiding place of his treasure.

"Hallo, old chap! How are you getting on?" remarked the visitor. "I have been watching your place all the afternoon. You will soon be retiring, I suppose? You have had a shop full of customers, and good 'un's too; I saw them come straight from the mine. How is it that your fool of an assistant let half of them go? I don't consider him much good. He is no business man, at any rate, and the sooner you discharge him, the better!" This short sentence was spoken as if he was a person in authority. Then, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he said, "Any luck, old chap?"

Jacobs' manner displayed that he knew what was meant, and it was very evident that this pair had done business before.

Addressing the new-comer, Jacobs said, "Look here, old man, I am tired of this game, and intend to give it up. I am feeling very done up after to-day's work, but if you will come over to-morrow night I will show you something that is worth a good deal of risk."

"Just let me have a peep at it," said his visitor,

"it surely would not take very long; I have not seen a decent stone since last week, when I bought the 25 carat-er."

At this request Jacobs took away the bottom part of the bedstead and out dropped the diamond. How their eyes sparkled! Both of them exclaimed simultaneously, "What a beauty!" It was only a glance, however, and, quick as lightning, Jacobs snatched it up and replaced it in its resting place, taking great care to cover the spot by replacing the dirty rag bandage and then throwing a blanket carelessly over the foot of the bed.

"Phew," said the new-comer, "what a lucky dog you are! How the dickens do you manage to secure such good stones? You must have a splendid system of working the natives; but you must not give up yet, you are only now beginning to understand the game. I can assure you that I am able to get rid of as many as you can buy, and you can always trust me, as you know. Well, ta-ta, old chap, take care of yourself." So saying, he walked straight out of the shop.

He had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards when two men overtook him. "Good evening, Mr. Linsky," said the elder.

Turning sharply round, he returned a solemn "Good evening," and added, "Excuse me, gentlemen, but you seem to have the advantage of me. You know my name, but I must confess I've no recollection of having ever met either of you before."

"Perhaps not," remarked the man who spoke first. "My name is Gregory. I was introduced to you on board the *Grantully Castle* about nine months ago—we were both first-class passengers and shared the same cabin."

Linsky was unable to say a word ; he seemed half-dazed. He remembered the man now, but he wished never to meet him again, although he had promised that he would help him if ever he came to Kimberley and needed assistance. He recognised him as the man who had taken a thousand pounds worth of diamonds for him, sewn up in his clothing, and to whom he had given two hundred pounds for so doing. Linsky remembered that he had proved trustworthy, for he himself had been arrested immediately he landed at Southampton. But of course he had nothing on him, and the English detectives, after every particle of his clothing had been searched and his luggage gone through and through, had apologised and averred that they had made a mistake. This man who stood in front of him was the one who had saved him and delivered the stones safe and sound at the — Hotel, Southampton.

As soon as he had recovered his wits, he gasped out, "B-u-t w-h-o i-s t-h-i-s g-e-n-t-l-e-m-a-n?"

"Oh, he is a friend of mine, please allow me to introduce him to you. Mr. West, Mr. Linsky, a friend of mine, whom I was telling you I met on the *Grantully Castle*."

"I am returning to my rooms in Knight Street," said Linsky ; "will you gentlemen dine with me ? I am not prepared for you, and you have taken me entirely by surprise. Nevertheless, I am very glad to see you, and I am disengaged this evening, so I think we may have a jolly time—just to remind us of the pleasant trip on the *Grantully*, eh, Mr. Gregory ? "

"Stay, Mr. Linsky," replied the man ; "we did not bargain for this. Shall we meet you in half an hour, as we are not dressed ? "

“Oh, never mind that,” said Linsky. “I have an engagement for to-morrow night, and the next also, and as there is great truth in the old saying that there is no time like the present, I think you had better come along with me, and see if we cannot spend a pleasant evening.

Mr. Gregory, it has been noted, was Linsky’s companion on the *Grantully*, and Mr. West, his friend, is a detective.

The usual questions were asked about the voyage, the weather in the Bay of Biscay, &c., and all tried their best to keep the conversation going. Linsky, in spite of his assumed cheeriness, was in a cold sweat. He would rather have given his late fellow-passenger another two hundred pounds than let him enter his quarters; as for the friend, he did not like the man’s stare when he was introduced. He had not a fair chance just then of seeing his face. There was a good deal of awkwardness in the conversation, because although they were all trying to talk upon various indifferent topics, their minds were fixed upon an entirely different subject.

“Well,” remarked Linsky, as they turned a corner, “this is Knight Street.”

The last light was the one at the corner of the Market Square, a powerful electric light that lit up the street for about a hundred yards, and after that there was a black space, as the moon was behind some clouds.

“Here we are,” remarked Linsky, pushing open a little gate in front of a nice one-storey building, which stood a little way back from the road. There was just room for a flower garden, and the blossoms themselves, although invisible, gave evidence of their presence by a sweet smell. “Perhaps it will be

better for me to go first, gentlemen, as you do not know the place." So saying, he led the way to the verandah, then turning to the left, he walked on a few paces, until he could be heard to insert a key in the lock. They came presently to windows that led out on to the broad verandah. A lamp was lit, and the light, penetrating a coloured shade, threw a pleasant rosy tint over a handsomely furnished room; a fire was burning, and the place looked quite homely and very inviting. Linsky rang the bell, and presently a neatly-dressed woman appeared.

"I am rather late this evening, Lena," he said. "I had a little extra business to do, and have brought two friends with me, so please hurry up supper, as we are all hungry."

"Yes, sir," said Lena, disappearing. The table was already laid, but only for two. The woman soon reappeared, this time with a tray laden with eatables, and as the three men were hungry, they made short work of the contents.



MR. "BARNEY" BARNATO.

CHAPTER II

AN OLD TRADER'S EXPERIENCES

Doubts and fears—Goodbye to Jacobs' store—A trading venture
—The farm at Boshof—The orchard; fruit and beauty—An
old trader's story—Unfounded accusation; an awkward fix—
The culprit caught—Safe once more.

“**I** THINK, after this affair, that I shall leave Kimberley altogether—I am about sick of this kind of living. I should not be surprised if I myself were arrested on suspicion, and look how disgraceful that would be for me—the mere fact of being accused and brought up before the judge for knowing that diamonds were being brought to this cursed place for sale! If I were asked the question by a detective I could not absolutely deny knowledge of the fact that natives bring diamonds here for sale, and that they sell them too. No, I'm full up, and I intend to 'get' as soon as possible; in fact, if my wagon and oxen were here I should put a load of goods on at once and try my luck in Namaqualand.”

This was said to me one day by the senior assistant, Mr. Curtis, as we stood behind the counter, during the trial of Mr. Jacobs, I.D.B.

“Where are your oxen and wagon?” said I. “If you tell me where they are, I will go and fetch them

for you, and if you'll take me, I should very much like to go with you. I have a little money in the bank, and would gladly put it with yours."

Curtis looked very much surprised at my offer. "What! You go?" said he. "Well, I have taken rather a fancy to you. Now listen to me. You, of course, have no idea of the country you are talking about, and I am rather afraid to take you with me, as it is still somewhat dangerous."

I implored him to cast aside his doubts and let me go with him, as I only wished to see Namaqualand. Never mind the profits; he could have the use of my little capital; all I wanted was that, providing we were successful, the amount should be returned to me when we got back. If unsuccessful—well, no matter, I could get another situation and jog along as I was doing now. I would have sacrificed everything to gain his permission to accompany him into the unknown country.

"If you have quite made up your mind to go with me," he returned, "I am handing in my week's notice to-day, but you must not do so yet. Just think over what I have said, and to-night, when we close, you can come to my house. I should like to talk to you, and explain the position, as you are very young, and easily led astray. By to-night, possibly, you will have changed your mind altogether."

I felt as if I was walking on air all that day. To think that at last I should have an opportunity of seeing the wonders of unexplored Africa! I thought of renowned travellers, like Livingstone and the rest, and pictured myself as an explorer. I remember thinking to myself that my chance had come, the chance for which I had longed. The day passed all too slowly, but I never had the least idea of changing

my mind. In the evening Curtis and I walked along in silence until we came to his rooms.

"I am not going to waste your time and my own," he began, and seating himself in a Madeira chair which stood under the verandah, he pushed one to me, motioning me to sit down. "I should much like to see you out of that shop," he went on. "In fact, I was speaking to an intimate friend of mine at midday, who is in charge of a wholesale business in town, and he says there is a vacancy for a young man. He thinks that if you suited, the wages would be £1 a month higher than you are now getting, and besides the firm is one that will push you on according to your ability. You already have a very good insight into the trade, and I should strongly advise you to give up your present position. You can send in your notice to-morrow, and I will make it my business to see my friend this evening, to make sure of the situation for you before you give notice to leave. It is your best course, as you will have a splendid chance of working yourself up in the world with such a firm. As for your going with me to Namaqualand, supposing the natives attacked and killed us, or you were to die of fever, or the worst enemy of all—thirst—crossing the desert! Why, to me it would seem like murder to take a young lad like you up there, only just out from England too."

And so young Curtis went on, till at last I could listen no longer. My expectations had sunk below zero; and to hear him speak of possible dangers depressed me. Still, I argued that other people had safely traversed these wild parts, and why could not I?

"Yes," he said, "trading, hunting, or exploring is like gambling on the Stock Exchange. A few people

have made fortunes at the game. But what about the hundreds and thousands who have been lost or ruined? We hear very little about them; only the lucky ones and the millionaires stick in one's memory."

Yes, my friend's words seemed only too true; but still I could not shake off the passion for adventure which had taken possession of me. Again I implored him to let me accompany him. He sat quiet for fully five minutes, tugging at his moustache, and his face giving every indication of a strong inward struggle.

At last he sprang to his feet, and, pushing his hands into his pockets, he broke the silence by saying, "Well, young man, your wish shall be granted. Now, how much money can you find towards buying the goods?"

I reckoned up and found that, with my week's salary to come I could manage about £35.

"You can give notice to old Cohen to-morrow, also at the Post Office savings bank, so that in about a week's time you will be able to draw out your money. It isn't much, but trust me and you will not have any cause to be sorry for doing so. Now, I have a lot of business to transact to-night, besides letters to write for to-morrow, and my dinner is waiting. Oh, you need not go home; stay and have some dinner with me."

I declined, however, as I was expected, and had left no word as to my whereabouts. I bade him good night, and walked home with a light heart, as fast as I could go, to tell the news to my friends at the boarding-house. I need hardly mention that our conversation lasted the whole evening and far into the night, the topic being the unknown regions (at any rate to many people) of Namaqualand and

Damaraland. They nearly all said I was very foolish, but I paid no heed, only regretting that I had broached the subject to them. But, as is always the case with a young man flushed with temporary excitement, he must unfold his ideas to others, soliciting their views and sympathy, and hoping that they will look at things in the same light as he does. Although I got no sympathy from any one, I was determined to go and see for myself. Possibly the lack of sympathy tended to strengthen my resolution.

That night I wrote out my notice, and handed it in to Mr. Cohen (Mr. Jacobs' representative) in the morning. He tore open the envelope as if in a passion, and scanned the contents hurriedly. "Humph! What's the matter?" he queried. "Mr. Curtis yesterday and you to-day. I suppose he has been talking to you. Some of you young fellows don't know when you are well off. I was going to give you charge of one side of the shop when Mr. Curtis left at the end of this week, and I would have raised your salary too. I think you ought to reconsider this (shaking the letter). I have told you plainly what I am willing to do, and your salary will be increased by ten shillings a week. There are many young men who would be glad of your position to-day. Has any other firm in town been offering you a larger salary, or what? If so, you need not have given notice to leave, but told me, as I can afford to give you as much as anybody else."

"No, sir," I answered, "my decision is final. I desire to leave this day week. My mind is fully made up and no one can alter it; money will not tempt me to stay."

"So! and where are you going to, may I ask?" he returned.

"I am going trading with Mr. Curtis, to Namaqualand."

"Well, you will never return, let me tell you that. I had a cousin who went up about fourteen months ago, and he had to fly out of the country, leaving his wagon, cattle, and all his possessions, and barely escaping with his life. He left Kimberley a wealthy man and returned penniless—with scarcely any boots to his feet and his clothes in rags. So severe was the journey that he would have died had not some friendly Korannas helped him. I will give you until tiffin to think it over."

"There is no need, sir; I repeat, my decision is final."

"Very well," he answered, and walked off apparently in a huff.

Curtis, whose home was at Boshof, in the Free State, had written and asked his brother to send up two saddle horses on the day after my week expired. They duly arrived, and I cannot describe how happy and free I felt as we were riding along on our way to Boshof, in the cool air of the early morning. We arrived at midday, and Mr. and Mrs. Curtis looked considerably surprised to see their son and a stranger too. He had told them he was doing so well at Kimberley, and it appeared there must surely be something wrong for him to turn up suddenly without warning. I heard the old man question his son as to his unexpected apparition directly we had dismounted. I was introduced, but seeing that some explanation was asked for, thought it best to make my escape for a little while, and espying an orchard about a hundred yards off, made

my way towards it. As I entered I heard some merry voices, and looking round saw two young girls under a quince hedge. I apologised for the intrusion, and was turning back when they called me by my name. I was, of course, surprised to find that they knew my name, as I had never seen them before in my life.

"Will you not have some peaches?" said a kindly voice; "we have just pulled some." The speaker, a pretty girl of about seventeen, stepped forward and continued, "Don't be bashful, we know who you are; my brother wrote and told us, and we saw you coming along from the top of the Kopje. Of course, we did not *know* that it was you, but we guessed it. We know how far it is from Kimberley, and also the exact time that Dick leaves there, and as we could only distinguish two horsemen we came to the conclusion that it must be you. But you must have ridden very fast, as we generally have time to pull some fruit and dig some potatoes, and have coffee ready by the time that Dick is here."

I acknowledged that we had ridden rather fast, at the same time taking a peach that she proffered me.

"I hope you will not think me forward," she added. "I ought to have waited for my brother to introduce us; but my name is Gertie, and this is my sister Alice."

"I am sure you must feel tired," said Alice. "Will you come and sit down in the house, or under the trees?"

I said that I preferred to sit where I was, and did so, and before we had been talking many minutes it seemed as if we had known each other for years. Alice was the younger, and would be about sixteen—

Gertie was about a year older ; but there was something which attracted me in these country girls, so plain-spoken and frank, that one could not help liking them. They both looked as healthy as young deer, and their dresses, though simple, were neat and trim. I felt at home at once. We were roused by Mr. Curtis, who came looking for lost sheep, he said. Directly the girls saw him they scampered off, but he seemed a jolly old gentleman.

“Come along, Gertie, where are the potatoes I sent you for, and where is the coffee? Oh, I see what you have been doing,” said the old gentleman, catching sight of me. “Ah, well, never mind, I was young myself once. So you are going to Great Namaqualand with my Dick, are you?” he said, turning to me. “Well done, young man! I hope you will both have a successful trip and a safe return. I am glad you are going with my lad, as otherwise he would have been lonely; for he would have had no other companions than the ‘boys’ (native servants). Yes, it’s a long way, but the old saying is, ‘Faint heart never won fair lady.’ If you manage to cross the desert, you are all right; but I shall have little fear for you, as my son has been trading in different parts of this country with me, and for many a long trip too. I am too old now, and must look after my farm; but if I had my youth again, I should do nothing but trade—there’s money in it, lad; yes, plenty of money, if you only keep your head cool and ‘salt’ the chiefs pretty well.” Mr. Curtis picked about a dozen peaches and laid them on the ground between us. “Now, don’t be shy,” he said, “eat as much fruit as you like; you will be with us for a few days. Dick’s wagons want some work done to them before he starts, and the job will take a little

time. We start work to-morrow morning, and you can join us at daybreak, as we are going to 'round up' the stock."

I was very pleased at his offer of a spin on horseback before breakfast. It was all new to me, and as for "rounding up," I did not know exactly what that was. I guessed correctly, however, that it meant getting the stock together.

"I remember my first trading trip only too well, for it nearly ended in the niggers catching me," remarked Mr. Curtis. Having lit his large pipe, he commenced telling some of his trading experiences, and I was all ears at once. "I came to the Colony in the early days, long before the Diamond Fields were discovered. I had just turned twenty-three, and had a draft on the bank at Cape Town for sixty pounds. It was all I possessed, but I was better off than a good many fellows that came over in the same boat. Some had nothing but the clothes they wore, having gambled away on board what pocket-money they left London with. Well, I had this sixty pounds; I was a total stranger and in a strange land. I came full of expectations, to seek my fortune, as many hundreds had done before me. I was very willing to work, but I hardly knew how to make a beginning. I always had my mind set on trading, as I had read such a lot about it in books, so I thought that if only I could get a companion who could speak the language and who knew the country—well, if I could drop across such a man I should be all right. I therefore put into the paper an advertisement which read something like the following:—

WANTED by a gentleman with a small capital, a partner who knows the country and can speak native languages—object, trading.

“Sure enough, the first day I got a letter from a man, Tom Blair by name. He told me that he had just returned from the interior, that the Kaffirs had taken all his goods and told him to clear out of the country, and that he thought himself lucky because the chief did not fine him five or six head of cattle for trading in his country without first asking permission. I felt very sorry for him, but from what he told me in those days the chiefs seemed to do just as they liked. Well, Tom Blair had got his wagon and oxen all right, but he had no goods and no money to buy any more; the wholesale firms with whom he dealt did not feel inclined to believe his story, and so he could not get anything on credit. The other firms in town did not know him, and it would have been useless to ask for their support, and as he afterwards said, it was lucky that he dropped across my advertisement. As he seemed a decent sort of a fellow, we made a bargain then and there; he valued his wagon and oxen (twelve of them) at sixty pounds—oxen were very cheap in those days. We went to the bank and cashed my draft, and then proceeded to load up, I, of course, leaving the buying to Blair. He did not go back to his old firm, and quite right too, in my opinion.

“We trekked from Port Elizabeth for fully three weeks, right into the heart of the Kaffir country, taking good care to get the chiefs’ permission to trade (for which concession they generally wanted a hatchet or two and some powder—of which we had a good stock). Well, after about a month’s trading our wagon was empty, and we had a nice lot of cattle together—as nice a lot as any one would wish to see. When we were within about thirty days’ trek of the border, some thirty Kaffirs, armed with knobkerries

and assegais, came along. They rode up, stopped our wagon, and ordered us to outspan—stunning one of our herd boys with a kerrie. The other one fled, and you may guess we were in a bit of a funk. However, we outspanned, and wanted to know what it was all about as we had parted friends with the chief and war had not broken out. Then the headman spoke out, and charged us with stealing two heifers. It fairly made my blood boil to be accused of stealing cattle by natives, but Blair was used to dealing with Kaffirs and I allowed myself to be pacified by him, which was very lucky, because, although we had rifles, with only the two of us against thirty, it would have been madness to think of force. My partner knew this, and asked for an 'Indaba.' The headman again charged us with stealing the heifers, saying that he had been instructed to bring them back, and fine us four cows. We tried all sorts of ways to get out of the mess we were in, but the headman wound up by giving some orders, and off went his men and started to drive our herd of cattle back again. I could stand this no longer, and, in a moment, picked up my rifle and shot the native who was shouting such a lot. The next instant the whole scene changed, and the rest were making for us with their assegais ready, shouting like a lot of demons. The headman, who had not left the wagon, stopped them from carrying out their unmistakable intentions, and eventually succeeded in quietening them. I was sorry directly I had fired, because, although we were in a fix before, we were now deep in trouble. Another 'Indaba' was held and some very tall talk indulged in, especially by the younger natives, the upshot of the whole thing being that we were taken prisoners, and had to return to the chief's town.

With heavy hearts we turned our faces towards the interior. A short time before this unfortunate event we had been joking about our luck, and our fine herd of cattle. Of course I blamed myself,—what were six cattle out of such a fine herd, or the whole lot, for the matter of that, to our present plight?

“After some days (I don’t know how many, I had not kept count, I was so miserable and so wild with myself for having given way to my quick temper), we came in sight of the chief’s kraal. When the natives heard what had happened, their anger was fearful; the warriors made a rush for us as if to stab us, but it was only to terrify, and the women yelled and told us how they would dance round the two white dogs’ graves at the full moon. ‘We are now preparing the beer for the dance—do you see, white dogs?’ Such were the words used towards us, and had not the chief interfered, I am certain that we should not be alive to tell the tale, for their anger seemed to increase daily. In fact, I sometimes wished that they would end our agony. We were kept in this way for four days, and then the chief sent for us. We were hooted and jeered at as we passed through the native town. Blair, however, was a splendid linguist, and it is certainly owing to him that we were saved, for the chief treated us like dogs until Blair gave him and his counsellors a speech.

“It appeared that a native had lost two heifers about three days after we had gone, and as we were the last to leave the place we were blamed for the loss. Hence all this trouble, and, as the cattle were not amongst our herd, they came to the conclusion that we had exchanged them for others on the way, or else driven them out of the territory as quickly as they could travel. Although Blair had made a good

impression upon the chief and his counsellors, we were still prisoners. That night, or rather in the early hours of the morning, Blair got up and gave me a dig in the ribs that made me believe that the savages were carrying out their threat. A second dig brought me to my feet. Poor Blair, whose face had been drawn and haggard for the last few days, seemed more cheerful in aspect, as I could see from the light (our candle was some fat from a piece of meat and a rough kind of wick fixed up in an old jam tin). Blair had lit this primitive lamp with his flint and steel. He seemed very excited, and at such an hour his demeanour struck me as savouring somewhat of the savage and unnatural. I was thunder-struck, and at first thought that the poor fellow had gone off his head. I shall never forget his face when he said, 'Do you know, Curtis, I can go and lay my hand on the two heifers the chief accuses us of stealing?' This expression nearly convinced me that I was right in surmising that he was 'clean gone.'

" 'Now, Curtis, listen while I speak, and try to use your brains a little, or else we are done for, and that within the next few hours. I heard them arguing as to how we were to be treated, and of all the hellish torture under the sun!—Ah, man, you do not understand their lingo, or your hair would have turned grey, as you tell me mine has done since we have been in this cursed place! Think, about five days after we left here, we passed over a road which was very rough, and you remarked it was a very good job indeed that we had not come that road, as with our full wagon we should not have been able to get over. Now think again, do you remember?—do you remember?' he repeated; 'no, your head is too thick

—of course you don't remember' (this in an angry tone). 'Well, let me start at the beginning: recall if you can the first day we outspanned at the old Kaffir kraal that was struck by lightning.'

" 'Yes,' I answered.

" 'The second night, just below the steep mountain, where we saw the blesbok.'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Third night by the Kaffir's land—where our oxen got in amongst his corn and we had to pay him a small tin of gunpowder?'

" 'Yes,' excitedly.

" 'Oh, you are coming to it now, eh? Fourth night at a native village, where they were dancing all night and where you tried to dance—you remember?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Now, the fifth night out, where did we sleep? You don't remember, eh? Was it not by the forest where the niggers sold us some fresh meat—some kind of buck (antelope) meat.'

" 'I remember plainly now,' I answered.

" 'Well, did not that old chap say that he had three heifers for sale, and I told him that as all our goods were sold and we had no money, we should have to leave them until we returned again, and he replied that if we had no goods, could we not do some exchanging? Now, I have been trying to think all along where it was that that man who asked me the question lived. Although it seems an ordinary question, let me tell you, Curtis, that our lives depend upon this matter. I am a man who understands the natives well; I have never before been asked by a nigger to exchange anything for a heifer, and you can never buy a heifer from one of them; a native's

cattle are his gods—he is always breeding and increasing his stock; he hates to part with any of his herd, and that is why one is never able to buy even a heifer from one of them. Now, coming more to the point, two of these heifers were the chief's lost animals, and the other one was put in as a blind. As we were going out of the country, what would be easier than to accuse us of stealing them? I'll tell you what I'll do. I shall see the chief to-morrow morning privately, or else the thief might get wind of it. You must stay here, and I will go and bring back the two stolen heifers.'

"I rubbed my eyes; I could scarcely believe that I was not dreaming.

" 'Look here, man, the risks I am going to run are very great. If the two heifers should turn out not to be those which were stolen, you may as well say your prayers, for our time will be up; we cannot get help, even if the Government knew that we were in danger, which they do not.'

"The day was just breaking as we finished talking, and our guards wanted to know whether the white gods were quarrelling as to who should die first. Now questions of this kind are *particularly* comforting.

"At sunrise, Blair asked to say a few very urgent words to the chief—words which none but his ear must hear. The chief, thinking that Blair was going to confess, granted the audience; but when he heard what it was, he looked solemn. Another tribe steal his cattle? Impossible! But if the white man wanted to go, he could; ten of his warriors, however, must accompany him; and if the journey proved fruitless, what then? It was understood that none should know what was up—not even the guards, whose orders

were to go with the white man for two suns' travel (five days with ox-wagon) and to bring him back either dead or alive. Blair left me all alone and I imagined all sorts of things—made myself ill, in fact, and wished myself dead rather than have to bear the intense suspense any longer. Blair managed to get to the old native's kraal just after sundown, taking care that none of the party showed themselves until they were close upon the kraal, so that if any moving of cattle took place the advancing party could plainly see. Blair rode straight for the kraal gate, and threw it open. The old native held his assegai in a threatening manner, but the guards stopped him from using it. Blair pointed out the two stolen heifers, and of course the guards at once recognised them as the chief's property. The owner of the kraal was terribly excited, and had attracted a number of his own people by his cries. As was only natural, he protested, and for a few minutes things looked very ugly between the two parties, but Blair told the natives who had assembled that this man had stolen the two heifers and that he had come to take them away, and intended doing so whether they liked it or not. Besides, each one of the ten men who were with him could certify that he was right—and, suiting the action to the word, the two animals were driven out of the kraal. A bold front is always necessary if one is dealing with a Kaffir, and if he is in the wrong, he will collapse like an empty bladder. This man was an instance in point; he gave in and disappeared inside his hut.

“Needless to attempt to describe my delight when Blair returned—I believe I cried for joy when the two blessed heifers turned up.

“After a little explanation, the chief came to where

we were and shook hands with us warmly, telling us that by daybreak on the morrow our cattle and wagon would be ready at a certain spot which he named, but which I cannot recollect after all these years. We spent a most enjoyable evening at the chief's large hut. I thought he had forgotten all about the native I had shot, but no, he hadn't. He said that if one man killed another, he generally fined him twenty or thirty head of cattle, but as he thought we had suffered enough he would let the small matter drop. A great load was lifted off my mind by the chief's words, and I think that any one who knows my story will admit that I suffered enough for my passionate action. The next morning, as the old man had promised us, all our cattle were on the spot and everything was in order. We wished the chief a hearty 'Goodbye,' and we have been excellent friends ever since. His tribe is split up now, though, owing to the Kaffir war. I afterwards heard that he sent four hundred men and demolished the kraal of the man who stole the heifers—killing him, and taking his cattle, women and children, as is the native custom."

"Well, father, I hope our first trading trip will not have in store for us any such difficulties. Still 'all's well that ends well.' This is the first time I have heard the whole story of your first expedition, although I have heard snatches of it at different times when you have had company."

Mr. Curtis looked surprised, for Dick came round the corner of the quince hedge very quietly and without attracting notice.

"I came down to call you for tiffin," added Dick, "but you were busy talking, and I know you don't like being interrupted when you are spinning a yarn."

"Aren't you good people hungry?" came from the house in a rather loud feminine voice. "We've been waiting for more than half an hour for you. You are telling some of your old yarns again, I suppose!"

I thanked Mr. Curtis heartily for the graphic description of his first and successful trading trip. Meanwhile Mrs. Curtis and the girls had not been idle, as was shown by the splendid meal which awaited us, and we did full justice to it after our bracing ride from Kimberley.



MR. ALFRED BEIT.
(At the age of 23.)

CHAPTER III

ON A SOUTH AFRICAN FARM

A chat in the orchard—In search of the cattle—Missing beasts—
A nasty accident—The sheep-stealers—My solitary expedition—A sudden storm—Lost on the veldt—A fortunate encounter—Kaffir friends in need—Back at the farm—The return of Dick—On the track of the thieves—Friendly Boer visitors—Fate of the forgotten horse—Fresh anxiety for Dick—Return of the wanderer—How the missing cattle were found—Final preparations for departure.

AFTER tiffin, we adjourned to the verandah in front of the old-fashioned Dutch house, and Mr. Curtis and his son were soon in deep discussion of the future, and as I could not join in the conversation I went for a walk towards the kopjes of which Gertie had spoken. The sun was scorching and the house seemed stuffy. Mrs. Curtis and her daughters were busy about the house, so alone and deep in thought I made my way towards the kopjes. On arriving at the top, there was a splendid view of the surrounding country, extending for miles. In front, looking towards Kimberley, I could see the winding road for about five miles, which seemed to lose itself under a hill known as Tafelberg (Table Mountain—so called on account of its flat top). On my right was another hill, standing alone as if

keeping sentry, and to the left was the open veldt extending as far as the eye could see. Here and there were clumps of bushes, beneath which I could see cattle sheltering themselves from the fierce rays of the sun. Below was the old-fashioned farmhouse, spruce and clean, with its whitewashed walls and broad verandah running from end to end. I could plainly distinguish my two friends, who seemed to be talking very seriously. In front of the house was a well-kept flower garden; at the back of the house a large dam, full of water, and below it the orchard, with a splendid quince hedge running the whole of its length. This hedge kept out the stock, but afforded good shelter for the cattle from the bitter July winds. Below the orchard, again, was the land under cultivation, a few acres of mealies, also wheat, oats and potatoes—in all, about ten morgen (twenty acres). What a contrast between this land under cultivation and the many miles around of nothing but wild veldt, waiting for the tiller who cometh not.

I saw a large stone where the sun had cast a shadow, and under this I laid myself down. I felt drowsy, and must have slept for fully two hours, when I was awakened by Alice, who was sitting on a stone about five yards away, amusing herself by throwing pieces of wood at me. I woke with a start, as a piece caught me edgeways on my hand.

“What a sound sleeper you are! Why I have exhausted a lap full of wood. We have been hunting high and low for you: Gertie is looking for you in the orchard, as she is sure that you must be sleeping under one of the trees. I did not say anything, but I had seen you from the house go to this very rock

and sit down, and I have been looking at you for fully ten minutes. I hope you are not angry with me for having wakened you in this way. I know you must be tired, but my brother told me that you liked a bit of fun, and it is very seldom that we get any visitors, with the exception of the young Dutch farmers round about. They are always talking about their fathers having killed nearly the whole of the British army a few years ago, and one gets sick of having their ignorant bluster for ever dinned into one's ears. But they don't say much when father is about. I often wish I had another brother, one who could stay at home with us girls; it is very lonely at times. Still, we have plenty to do, riding about the farm after the stock. We have only one English farmer in the district, and his place is about five miles from here. Dick says he expects to be away in Namaqualand for three months. I wish he would not go so far away. Mother says it is very dangerous; she knows, for she has heard father say so." Here I could plainly see the girl's eyes were getting moist.

I was surprised to hear this young girl speak to me so openly, as she had scarcely conversed with me before, and I was glad to see that her shyness had worn away already.

"Mother told us you were going with Dick," she continued. "We are glad that some one is going with him as I know it is dreadful travelling such long distances, with no one to speak to except native servants."

I answered her that we should be all right—although I did not know the country—and that I should come back again, safe, to the very spot where we were now sitting.

Alice cast a quick glance at me, and said half aloud, "I do hope that your words will come true."

We returned to the house and had a very jolly evening, both girls displaying unmistakable taste on the piano, and singing very well, which showed that, despite the drawbacks of country life in South Africa, their education had not been neglected. They had, as a matter of fact, only left school about ten months before.

The next morning I was called very early, and found Mr. Curtis and Dick in the breakfast room, having early coffee, which had been prepared by the girls. After a cup of coffee and a few biscuits, some of which we put into our pockets, we all proceeded to the stables and found three horses already saddled—one with a gun in a bucket. The day was just breaking when we started, and I began to wish that I had brought my overcoat, as the wind was very sharp on the open veldt which stretched out before us. There was neither roadway nor footpath, but my companions knew where the cattle were most likely to be found. We were in Indian file, the old gentleman leading. At the foot of a hill we stopped and rested our horses, having struck a footpath or cattle spoor, after about a ten-mile ride across country. There was no fear of our getting lost for the Curtis's knew every hill about this side of the country for miles and miles.

Fifteen minutes and we were off again, this time climbing up the hill. The path was steep and narrow, and dangerous, so we led our horses for about half a mile. When we seemed to have come to the top, which was almost as flat as a table, we saw some cattle; and as we approached them, they seemed inclined to dispute our right to intrude,

snorting and shaking their heads which were adorned with very large and dangerous-looking horns.

"They look fresh enough, don't they?" said Mr. Curtis. "They have not been in the yoke for some months now, and are as fit for a long journey as ever oxen were."

Dick did not seem to hear his father's words, but rode a little faster towards the cattle, and, standing up in his stirrups, was looking very keenly over them.

"What are you looking at so hard?" said his father, and then in the same breath he answered himself, "They don't look as if they were all here; we must count them, Dick, although we shall have a job to do it, as they have not been in the kraal for months."

"Counting will not bring back six of my oxen, father," said Dick.

"Six, did you say—why, how could they have got away? I send the boy every morning to see if the cattle are all here, and at night he has always reported 'all right,' so that if any have got away it must have occurred last night. But they are cattle born on the farm, so that they will not stray far. Let us count them, all the same."

We drove the cattle near the precipice on the one side of the hill and Dick got into such a position that they must pass him. When they had all passed, we rode up to where he was standing, and he looked very angry.

"There are more than six gone, father; I counted 146 and there ought to have been 153 all told—so that there are six oxen and the little fat cow to look for. Some of those cattle have been on the farm for four or five years, and where an ox has been brought up

there will he stay. I think I shall go and look for them in the valley " (pointing to a place about four miles away). "Let Mac come with me, and you can be taking the cattle to the homestead." The old man did not say anything, for he saw that the loss of the cattle had upset his son.

We gave the horses a little rest, and after having had a rough breakfast of biltong, rusks, and spring water, helped Mr. Curtis to the bottom of the hill with the cattle. Dick and I then rode in an easterly direction, across the virgin veldt. We cantered for about three miles without drawing rein, though the sun was beginning to get hot and our horses were sweating badly. We were nearing a deep gully, when suddenly Dick's horse stumbled and threw him with considerable force. The horse's forelegs sank into the ground, while its hindquarters were floundering as well. It struggled desperately and then turned a complete somersault and disappeared. I dismounted quickly and found that Dick was stunned. The ground being so smooth, he had been quite unprepared, and was badly shaken. A little brandy from his flask, however, soon revived him, and by good luck no bones were broken, but he had had a nasty fall and was bruised.

"Where is my horse?" he asked presently. "I don't see him. Has he cleared?"

"I don't know," I replied, "I think he has fallen into the gully."

He got up quickly, and seemed now to forget that he was shaken and bruised from the fall. We went to the brink of the gully, which was fully ten feet from where we were, and there sure enough was the poor horse lying at the bottom, groaning. The ground where he fell was very sandy, so that if he had had

a clean fall, he would only have shaken himself severely, like his master, but we feared that in turning he had broken a leg. We had to walk a long way before we could find a place to descend, the sides being very steep and fully fifteen feet high. When we came to the poor animal we examined him all over on the upper side and at last got him on his legs, which we found to be sound; but discovered that three ribs were broken where he had fallen on the butt of the rifle, the rifle itself being completely smashed. After walking for a few yards, he seemed to be all right, although, of course, he was no good for riding; so we left him standing, and went back to examine the place where he had fallen. Here was a veritable cave which had been made by the water in the rainy season. The soil above it was only some nine inches in thickness where the horse had gone through, and if we had been riding straight for the gully, instead of turning about two hundred yards off as we did, Dick would have been killed, as he would not have had the chance of throwing himself off. We examined the cave, and found bare foot-marks, which showed plainly that natives knew of its existence, as all white men wear coverings on their feet. We went in for about twenty feet and found sheep skins and bones and the still warm remains of a fire. Here was a discovery!

"Well," said Dick, "so this is where my sheep go to, is it? I never thought of finding out in this way the thieves who have for months baffled father and the police with all their native detectives. Although they have been to every likely part of the farm, they have never yet found this spot."

While he was talking, he noticed a hole in the cave, about five feet up. Here, when our eyes got

used to the semi-darkness, we could see stuffed a blanket, a cooking tin, and an old jacket. Dick searched the pockets, and in one of them found a piece of riem,* and a note written in the Kaffir language.

Dick read it. "Phew, the devil it is! Now we are on the track. I shall leave these things as we have found them, but take the note. Let us hurry out of this as soon as possible, before the thieves come back. You go to the right, and I will go to the left, and we will see if we cannot find a place to lead my poor horse up. If you get on in front of me, do not shout, but come back to the cave and wait for me—don't go far away."

I had not gone very far when I discovered a well-worn footpath, so returned. In a few minutes Dick came back as well, having also found a footpath, and more important still, the spoor, or tracks of cattle; and as they were never driven down that way the fact was all the more important, as it must be either the footprints of the stolen or strayed beasts, or else those of some trespassers.

We were in rather a fix, as Dick's horse could not be used, and we could not stay in the vicinity very long for fear the marauders should return, and, finding that their retreat had been discovered, make good their escape. Moreover the longer we stayed the less chance we had of getting the missing cattle. Dick thought that the best plan would be for me to lead the injured horse straight back to the house, while he would take my nag and follow the spoor of the cattle. I looked round, and for the life of me could not point out the direction in which we had come, for to me the country seemed all alike. There

* Raw hide used as a thong.

were no landmarks to guide me, as we had cantered across the veldt at a good speed. Dick, who knew the farm well, looked at me and guessed what I was thinking of. He went with me, therefore, and when we got clear of the bushes, pointed out the projecting peak of a hill in the far distance, and said I was to make straight for it. When a little more than half way he said I should strike a footpath, and about four-hundred yards farther on another. This second I was to follow up, and turning to the left it would bring me almost to the house.

It was now about midday, the sun was scorching hot, and I should have to push on as much as possible, as, being on foot, it would take me until sundown to reach the homestead.

“When you get to the house,” said Dick, “tell them that I have gone to look for the cattle, and not to trouble to send any one to help me at all, as I am going on until they are found.”

We shook hands before parting—a rather significant sign, I thought, it being the first time we had ever done so—and it was a good grip, too. There’s a deal in the shake of the hand. I knew by the manner of the clasp that Dick seemed to foresee some trouble which he was fully determined to face. But with a casual “So long,” we parted. What a terrible journey I had over the scrubby bush and stones! My trousers were torn to rags by frequent contact with thorny bush, and my feet were getting sore. In some steep places, the poor horse, feeling the pain of its broken ribs, groaned in a pitiful manner. Clouds were gathering ahead and I was unable to keep the landmark constantly in view, but could only see it at intervals as I came to the tops of the unceasing ridges. There was a deep gully to cross; it was

somewhat steep also, both down and up, and I had to rest several times, in fact I was dead tired when we reached the next ascent. When I did get there, I looked in vain for the landmark—the direction in which it lay was enveloped in a large cloud, which I knew meant rain, and soon heavy drops of rain began to fall thickly. In a few minutes it was pouring in torrents, while the thunder and lightning were terrific. Luckily I struck a footpath, but I could go no further as the dusk began to fall, and it was soon as dark as pitch. I was in a terrible plight; cold and drenched to the skin, without shelter, hungry and, what was worse still, alone on the veldt. I began to wish myself back again in the store at Kimberley. This was an experience which I did not bargain for. The horse was under the circumstances a most precious companion, and sensible beast that he was, he appeared to know that it was no use trying to go any further. When I took the saddle off, he laid himself down with a lot of groaning, taking good care to sink down on to his off side, where the ribs were uninjured. I took the saddle for my pillow and lay alongside the poor beast to keep myself warm, trying vainly to sleep. The rain came down more furiously than ever, and it continued with the utmost violence for a long time, but at last it appeared that the clouds had exhausted themselves, the torrents diminished to a drizzle, and the wind fell, but the night was blacker than ever. I could plainly hear the water rushing down the valley which I had come through, and which seemed to serve as a sort of basin or reservoir for a long range of hills.

I pondered over many things as I lay alongside the injured horse. I wondered whether Dick was all right or whether, like myself, he was out in the

storm. I thought of the anxiety there would be at the house ; but felt certain that Dick, knowing the country, and seeing that a storm was coming up, would make for the nearest farm, although it might have been a good few miles away. I dare not shift my position. If I tried to go forward, the chances were that I should get lost, and that would be worse than ever.

The night seemed as if it would never end, but at last the morning star peeped out, and slowly, very slowly, it crept upwards, until I saw the grey light of dawn. It cost me a terrible effort to move, for I was stiff in every joint. My motion must have startled the horse, for he snorted, and just as I cleared myself tried to spring up, but, with a groan, fell down again. I felt numb all over and could not use my legs, which were without sensation and seemed to belong to some one else. I tried to stand, but could not do so. I then started throwing my arms about, and dragged myself on top of a rock. I began rubbing and pinching my legs, and gradually felt the life coming back to them. I stamped my feet, but directly I stood up my legs gave way, and I fell as if I had been shot, and, in falling, scratched my face and hands. I tried rubbing again, and kept this operation up until daybreak, when I could look around me. I could once more see my landmark, but I was a long way out of the road, which I had evidently missed by crossing the valley. Up came the glorious sun ; and what a comforter he was to me that morning ! No wonder that savages worship the sun as a god ! I felt inclined to turn worshipper myself, so delighted was I to see it in all its magnificence. I soon had all my clothes off, and there I sat naked in the sunshine. I was faint,

and sadly in need of something to eat, but in my present state I felt I could not possibly go on, and would have to stay until I was found. But, how were they to know at the farmhouse? Seeing that we had not returned last night, they would have naturally come to the conclusion that we had gone in search of the lost cattle.

Slowly, as the sun rose, I became better, but I was still very stiff and hungry. I put on my shirt and pants, although still wet, and tried to walk a bit, but could not manage it, so gave it up and lay down. I fell asleep and must have slept for some little time, as the sun was high in the heavens when I awoke. It was an unpleasant awakening. I was more hungry than ever, and felt extremely faint. I looked at the horse and as I did so remembered that I had read in books of horses having been shot to provide food for their riders. I thought that if the horse was to save my life thus, then it were better to kill it before I lost all my strength. I had a good pocket knife, so I could easily "pith" him as he lay on the ground. I seriously believed that I should have to adopt this course, and looked towards the animal again, when he pricked up his ears and gazed at me. No, I decided, I could not do it, and rather than take the poor brute's life, we must perish together. With this resolution I once more lay down, with a sickening feeling, and slept again.

The sun was disappearing behind the hill, when I heard voices. Some people were talking very loudly, and I could make out that they were Kaffirs. I did not mind what they were—anything to get out of my unfortunate predicament. I made one more effort to get up, but found I could not do so, even by using all my remaining strength, so I shouted as loud

as I could, and the voices ceased at once. Again I shouted, this time in Kaffir, "Come and help me." At this I heard some talk in subdued tones. They could not be far away, as I could plainly hear the voices, although I could not make out what was said, so I called out again, "I am in trouble. Don't run away; I am not a policeman, to catch you for trespassing." As I called out, I could hear the natives approaching, but could not see them. Presently I saw one peer round a large boulder, and our eyes met.

"What are you afraid of?" I said; "don't hide behind stones, but come out."

He timidly came to where I was sitting, followed by another man about two yards behind. "Hallo, master," said the first, "what are you doing here? I thought you were still at the diamond fields."

I thought I recognised the man, but was not sure as he had his back to the setting sun. "Come closer, let me look at your face; your voice seems familiar to me." He obeyed immediately, sinking on to his knees. "Oh, it's you, Joss? Whatever brings you here? I thought you were with old Baas Jacobs, and sent, with a free passage, to Cape Town, to work for the Government for seven years."

"Hush, do not speak so loud," answered Joss. "I left the fields directly that man was trapped. I have been home to Kaffirland, and heard from one of the young men who came from the fields a few days ago that young master, Baas Dick, had left that bad man's store and was going to some far-off country. I and my brother have therefore hurried forward to see if he wants any drivers for his bullock teams. We have come quickly and were nearly caught for trespassing on a farm near by, as we have

come across the mountains, which is much nearer than by the wagon road. The law is very hard against us for going these short cuts, as farmers think that every black man is a sheep stealer. That is why we tried to escape when you first cried out to us; but I thought I knew your voice, and your words were not those of a man sent to catch us, so we came forward. But, my young master, what brings you here, and in this state? Why, you look nearly dead, and that horse there, I heard it make a noise as if in pain. What has happened to you?"

"Never mind about my appearance, or the horse!" said I. "Have you anything to eat? I will tell you all about it after a while."

Joss saw that I was hungry, and without another word sent his brother to bring some water in a can, and very soon a fire was lit. Joss took some mealies and biltong from his leather bag, and stewed them together, and in a short time I was enjoying what was, from the point of appetite, one of the best meals of my life.

After I had satisfied my hunger somewhat, I told Joss what had happened since I had parted with Dick Curtis. He listened attentively, as only a native can when he is deeply interested, giving an occasional grunt to let me know that he was following me carefully. I was so taken up with my story that I had not noticed how fast the night was approaching, so we hurriedly made ready to start for the house, which was a good distance away. Joss, of course, knew the road well, as he had often travelled it on his journeys to and from Kaffirland. "This path, however," said Joss, "is very seldom used, but we have seen a man on horseback, and it must have been Baas Curtis looking for his cattle. Directly we

saw him, my brother and I went a long way out of our way, and so got on to the track on which we are now travelling."

I was now to be carried by the two natives, who made a sort of a hammock by tying their blankets together, making use of the stirrup leathers and bridle; and, leaving the horse and the saddle, we started. It was beginning to get very dark, but Joss said that they would stop for nothing, as he knew the road well, even although the night might be as dark as his skin. "I shall not sleep," he said, "until you are safe inside the old Baas's (Mr. Curtis's) house." We talked and joked all the way and I began to feel quite myself again, and insisted on walking a little. Although I could only go slowly, still it rested the boys, and brought back the circulation of my blood. It was now pitch dark, but we stumbled on, the conversation gradually dwindling away until it ceased altogether. Keeping on for fully three hours, we at length lay down to rest, first lighting a fire, as the wind was beginning to blow cold, and the natives had had nothing to eat since the morning. In passing a little stream, one of them had filled his can, so that when we camped he would not have to go back for water. Mealies and biltong were cooked together, and I joined in the meal, for I was still very hungry, although in better spirits than I had been a few hours before.

My adventure now seemed so romantic that I had almost forgotten what a dreadful night I had spent. Joss was telling some very amusing tales to his brother, who was on his first journey away from their kraal, and in the silence which followed the conclusion of one of the stories, we heard the faint bark of a dog. Joss was all ears at once. We could not judge its exact

whereabouts, and it was impossible to see, but even at the slow pace we had come we ought not to be much more than half an hour's journey from the house; and the bark might have come from one of the servants' huts, as Mr. Curtis had not so small a dog. I thought it better to get up and go on, so, although we were all tired, we pushed on till old Joss said, "What's that?—a light!" This brightened up our spirits, as Joss had begun to think that he had lost the road.

We made straight for the light, leaving the footpath. As we got nearer to the friendly gleam, the servants' dogs, a lot of mongrels, came rushing out, and we could also hear the rough bark of the big dog which was chained up. The din made by the dogs brought out a man with a lantern, and he came straight up to us. The door was open, and by the light from the inside I could see some womenfolk peering into the darkness. The man, whose voice I recognised, called out—

"Who's that? Don't stand there; speak!"

So I replied, "It's I, Mr. Curtis."

"Who are you?"

"Mac."

"Oh! That's all right, but who are the two natives, and where is Dick? Something has happened, I know. Here, come this way all of you."

The womenfolk scampered off on our approaching the house, and we walked in. The lamp was lit, and in its bright glare I must have looked a sorry specimen of humanity—my clothes torn, and all over mud, myself haggard, worn and weary. Mrs. Curtis made her appearance in a dressing-gown, and seemed rather excited, as she exclaimed, "Where's our Dick?" and made many inquiries.

I told them all that had happened since we left Mr. Curtis that morning until the time of the natives bringing me in. Mr. Curtis was loud in his praise of the natives, and his wife was soon bustling about getting something ready for me—not forgetting the two natives, to each of whom she gave a loaf of bread and some cooked meat. They were shown into the forage room for the night, with strict instructions not to light their pipes. The girls had meanwhile slipped on their clothes and come in, having told their father they could not sleep. They marvelled at the Providence which had led the natives on to the very road where they would find me. And then they were so sorry to hear about the poor horse, which was a favourite. They told me they had been in a state of great anxiety when the thunderstorm came on, as they feared we might be out in it.

I delivered Dick's message, and they were just going to retire when we heard the furious barking of dogs, and old Lion trying to break his chain. Thinking it was some one trying to steal his sheep, Mr. Curtis took down the revolver from a nail above the mantelpiece and examined it thoroughly. "I've lost so many sheep lately," he said; "the police can do no good, so I shall take the law into my own hands. There is no English law here, either, so I need not be afraid to fire."

Mrs. Curtis warned her husband not to take so dangerous a weapon with him, as it might be Dick returning with the cattle, and so, lighting the lantern, he just opened the door, when a horseman rode up quite close and cried, "It's all right, father; it is I—Dick. Why! You do keep late hours now, and there's mother and Gertie and Alice about too. What's up? Have you been waiting for me?"

"We will explain that later, my son," said the old man. "Where are the cattle; have you put them into the kraal?"

"No," Dick replied, "I've brought none. I'm very hungry, but must give my horse something to eat first." So the two men made their way to the stable, and presently came back again.

"Well," said Dick, "we have made a nice mess of things, haven't we? Father has just given me a rough outline of what you have gone through. I'm now very sorry that I did not come back with you; for you must blame me for your miserable experience."

The poor fellow was nearly as hungry as I had been, but between the mouthfuls we learned that he had been to within a few miles of the Basutoland border, and there heard from a farmer, a personal friend of his, that a native had passed his place with the oxen and a cow. The farmer, for curiosity's sake, had stopped the native and asked to see his pass, and this document, written in good English, testified that the bearer was the owner of the cattle, and on his way to his home in Basutoland.

"That's what comes of educating the nigger, father," said Dick. "Now, if the man had had no pass, he could never have got through the country."

"It is now nearly two o'clock," said the old man. "You are both tired, and we can do nothing in this unfortunate business to-night, but we will see what we can do to-morrow." So we all went to bed, and I slept as well as I had eaten.

When we got up, strange to say, I felt little the worse for my adventure, with the exception of a slight stiffness. Joss was surprised to see his young Baas, and to find me up and about, consider-

ing the state I had been in the previous day. By breakfast time a plan of campaign had been decided upon. It was a good thing that the horses had been brought in from the veldt, and were ready in the kraal with the cattle, as a lot of time would otherwise have been lost. Dick was very glad that Joss and his brother had turned up so opportunely; and their object in coming was attained, for they were both engaged that morning. Dick explained to them that he could not start until he got the lost cattle, or replaced them by others for which he would have to go into the Kimberley market. The boys offered their services to search for the cattle instead of resting idle on the farm, and of course their offer was accepted. The plan settled upon was that Dick and Joss should ride straight for the Basutoland border, where Joss's knowledge of the country and of the most likely place to find the cattle would probably prove invaluable. I doubt whether it would have been of any use to go without him, for farmers said that once stock had crossed the Caledon River, it was useless to try and follow them up. After hasty preparations had been made and two fresh horses chosen from the kraal, they set off, Joss riding bareback to the spot where we left the wounded horse, when he would pick up the saddle we had left behind.

The other native, who said his name was Maralong, and whom for the sake of brevity we afterwards called "March," was to help Mr. Curtis rebrand Dick's cattle, and to see that all yokes, chains, and neckstraps, riems, wagon sails, water barrels, &c., were in order. Although a short order on paper, it meant a lot of work to get everything ready for a long journey, as any South African traveller knows. The branding was a rather dangerous operation, as

the oxen had not been in the kraal or yoke for a long time, but had been allowed to run about the veldt for months. Inside the house all was bustle, the women making rusks (two grain bags full of them), putting up biltong, and packing a box with strong, serviceable clothing. All Dick's boxes were turned out, and only absolutely necessary clothes were packed. These were put into the one strong box that was to be his wardrobe, medicine chest, and safe for many months to come. I had nothing in particular to do, and so watched the proceedings very carefully. The two wagons were the ordinary sixteen-ox buck-wagons, one having a tent, and being nicely fitted up with a kartel or bed. This kartel was a strong wooden frame, with riems crossed and re-crossed somewhat like laths on an iron bedstead. The tent was lined with green baize, and had a row of canvas pockets on each side for any kind of small articles such as a traveller might need on a long journey. Underneath the wagon bed, and about two feet from the ground, was a sort of movable crate, which was to hold the kettles, pots, &c. In the front of the wagon was a large wooden box in which to put all the crockery, enamelled ware, and eatables, while on each side was a box for the spare yoke skeys, riems, &c., and hanging from each was a water-barrel. I thought that the bed of the wagon was very deep; and on examining it closely I found it was hollow, there being a space of about six inches for the full length of the wagon. I could not make out what that was for, and was a good deal puzzled. However, I understood what all the other compartments were for, so made up my mind not to be inquisitive, but wait and see. The other wagon, which had no tent, was built in the same way, also with a big

box in front, which was to contain the servants' belongings.

At this work four busy days went by. The fifth day, being Sunday, we had visitors—a neighbouring Dutch farmer, his vrouw, a son and two daughters—who drove over and arrived just after breakfast. Gertie, Alice and I had arranged to go for a ride, in fact the horses were standing in the kraal, waiting to be saddled, but our ride had, of course, to be abandoned, for a while at any rate. However, they were all nice people, and seemed very friendly indeed. There was a little shyness at first, but it very soon wore off, as is the case with country folk towards a stranger. The conversation was all in Dutch, for the visitors could not speak a word of English, and I made plenty of fun for them by trying to speak in Dutch. However, I had very good interpreters, so I got on excellently.

We young people did not stay very long in the house, but were soon amusing ourselves in the orchard, of course taking good care that our elders did not see us. The two Dutch girls seemed very nice and agreeable, but I thought it a pity that their parents had not had them taught English. I asked the younger the reason, and she replied that she thought that in a Dutch country all the children should be taught their mother-tongue only. In support of her argument she mentioned the case of a Dutch farmer who had had his children taught by an English governess, and then sent them to finish their schooling at Bloemfontein, where they came into contact with other well-educated Dutch and English girls. After staying there for a year, they went back to the farm; but the life was too dull for them, in fact they despised the house in which they had been

brought up, and found fault with the coarse food and rough furniture, and were very discontented with everything. Instead of the old couple, who had been looking forward to ending their days in peace and in the company of their children, being pleased with them, they were bitterly disappointed. For the sake of peace, therefore, the old father was only too glad to let his girls go back to town again. The mother was so grieved at the change in her daughters' characters, so anglicised had they become, that she had even refused a drink of water to more than one Englishman who had unluckily chanced to pass that way. The old lady remarked one day that the English had stolen her children, and she had nothing to live for, while the old Boer had made his will so that when he and his wife were both dead the farm was to be sold, and the proceeds given to a Dutch church, on the distinct understanding that not a word of English was to be spoken in the sacred edifice.

I thanked the Dutch girl for the way in which she had explained all this to me, and promised her that if ever I got the chance I would let the English people know how two poor old Dutch hearts were broken, and I have kept my word. Gertie, who was interpreter in this little story, smiled as she turned away, leaving me facing the lighter-hearted Dutch damsel, who went on speaking and pointing. I again called upon my interpreter to help me out of my difficulty, and she told me that the Dutch girl was asking whether I would join those who were going over to her father's farm on the following Thursday, as it was her birthday, and a number of visitors were expected. "There will be a lot of dancing," she said.

"But I don't dance," I replied. "You must make some excuse for me."

On this remark of mine being translated, the Dutch girl said she would soon teach me.

The other two girls now came up, but as they were talking Dutch, I did not know what they said. I could, however, see that the joke was at my expense. We heard a voice calling something like "Johanna," and so we went up to the house and had some coffee, for which we had been expressly summoned. The old Dutchman and his vrouw were talking, when presently he beckoned to me. I went over, and he said something which I could not comprehend. I shook my head, and Alice informed me that he was asking me what I thought of his country. I had not seen much of it, so could not well answer. I recalled that dreadful night on the veldt, and felt inclined to say something the reverse of complimentary, but thought it better not to do so. He then asked me whether I intended staying in the country, and I answered in the affirmative.

"Where are your people?" he inquired. "In Kimberley? Do they allow you to go out into the world at so early an age?" This was rather a poser, as I had taken French leave, so I answered, "No." "Then you will soon go back again," he said, and, turning to Mr. Curtis, made a remark, which Alice afterwards told me was, "You English are a queer nation, you never seem to be settled; you are nearly as bad as our old voor-trekkers in the early years. But what puzzles me is that all those splendid horses and rifles come from England, and yet I have never seen an Englishman who could ride or shoot really well—how is that?"

To which Mr. Curtis answered, "Oh, the English-

man never bothers about that; he just manufactures the guns you buy."

"Yes," pursued the old Dutchman, "making money is all you care about. No matter how far the distance is and how dangerous the road, if his mind is made up and there is money at the end of it the Englishman will get there. I'll back the English for trade against any other nation."

And so the argument went on—the same old English *versus* Boer contention, which has been the common, everyday discussion for years in this country, the controversy being kept up until tiffin was announced. The meal concluded, we adjourned to the orchard, where, under the trees, we spent an enjoyable afternoon. I could not help admiring our Dutch friends with their childlike prattle, apparently without cares of any sort, and always jolly and ready for any amount of simple fun. The afternoon slipped away quickly, and about an hour before sundown the party drove off with many handshakings and pleasant wishes.

The sixth evening passed without any signs of young Curtis, and we began to feel very uneasy about him. On the following day Mr. Curtis said that if Dick did not turn up by the next evening he would go and see whether anything had happened to him. Although a man well advanced in years, he still had any amount of pluck and endurance, and the possibility of a long journey to Basutoland did not seem to trouble him very much. The thought of leaving the farm unprotected disturbed him far more, and had prevented him going before. March and I went to see about the horse that had been left behind when the two natives brought me to the house. As a matter of fact the poor beast had been

quite forgotten in the bustle and excitement of the past few days. There was only one man's saddle left in the house, and I could not take that, as Mr. Curtis said he would keep it in case of emergency, so we both rode bareback to the rescue of the unfortunate brute, which had been left to its fate. I felt sick and self-reproachful at the thought that the animal that had virtually saved me from perishing from cold had been so entirely forgotten. Mr. Curtis did not fail to comment severely on my neglect, as he said that while he had been so busy I had had nothing to do, and yet I could not spare a thought for the unfortunate animal. His words cut me keenly, the more so because he was speaking the truth, and this made me all the more eager to get away immediately. Cantering in Indian file along the narrow footpath that led to the hills, we came in sight of the place where the injured horse had been left. We saw a lot of vultures, which too surely betokened the fate of the deserted beast, but I eagerly hastened to the spot, hoping that we had been deceived; but alas! it was not so! The poor animal, having been unable to get up, had been starved to death, and now the vultures were gorging on his remains. I was very young and impressionable, and I turned away sick at heart, and displayed some emotion.

The native seemed surprised at my sorrow, and said, "Why is the young Baas's heart so sore? There are plenty more horses on the farm. Mr. Curtis is a very rich farmer and he will not feel the loss of one horse."

We rode away from the scene, and the native, breaking the silence, repeated his question. I did not answer for a long time, and when I explained to him as well as I could that the animal had saved my

life, he only answered with a grunt. We talked no more for the rest of the ride, but this episode was a lesson to me, and one that I shall never quite get out of my memory. On reaching the homestead no questions were asked—they knew what had happened. Only Alice came up to me as I was leaning against the post of the verandah, and said, "Is poor Charlie dead?" I did not answer, but she understood my look. "That was Dick's favourite horse," she said, "the one he always used for buck-hunting. I do feel sorry for him, he is in bad luck's way lately. Father is looking quite bad, too; he won't eat and is always walking to the top of that hill there, and stands for hours on the watch to see if Dick is returning. He has been feeding the brown mare with forage all day to-day, and I think he will start to-morrow at daybreak."

We all seemed to be under a spell, none of us speaking above a whisper. The hearty laugh was no longer heard, the girls were losing their colour, and we felt as if something dreadful was going to happen. Mr. Curtis broke the silence that evening, saying that he could stand it no longer, and that at daybreak he would be off to see what had become of Dick. Next morning the brown mare was led out, prancing about, and playing with the bit, and pulling hard at the reins. Mr. Curtis patted her on the neck and said to her, "You will not be so fresh when we return, my lass," and in my presence gave his wife instructions that we were not to go further away from the house than the hill.

After he had ridden away, I made my way to the ridge and saw him disappear in the hills beyond. I was joined by Alice, who brought me some rusks and coffee, and said that they would not prepare

any breakfast that day. We ate in silence, for our minds were far away, and neither felt inclined to talk. The meal finished we scanned the country round, and could plainly see the herd-dogs with the cattle. Presently a small cloud of dust rose in the distance. We watched intently, and gradually the object grew larger, till it was plainly to be seen on the road.

“There’s some one coming,” cried Alice; “I’ll go and tell mother,” which she did, leaving me on the watch. Mrs. Curtis and the two girls came up quickly, and were very excited. As the objects gradually got nearer we could distinguish that they were two horsemen. Mrs. Curtis and Gertie went back to the house to lock and bar all doors, but left one window open so that Alice and I could get in. The big dog was let loose, and March was sent to tell the herd-boys to get all the stock into the ravine behind the hill, where they would be out of sight. We could plainly see the stock moved, and quickly too; but the horsemen still advanced slowly, and it seemed that they were walking their horses. Alice remembered that there were some field-glasses in the drawing-room and ran to get them, and on looking we could now distinctly make out that one of the two figures was Mr. Curtis himself. The other must be Dick, as, of course, his father would not return without him. We stayed on the ridge until they were within a mile, so as to make sure, and, right enough, they were Mr. Curtis and Dick. We saw that we had been foolish to make as much fuss as if there were civil war in the country. Mrs. Curtis remarked this in one breath, and then in another that it was as well to be careful and on the right side, as prevention was better than cure. So

breakfast was laid after all, while we waited on the stoep. As Dick and his father came in we could see that the former was tired out. His face was covered with dust, his clothes with mud, and his horse was dead-beat; indeed, the poor beast stopped before it got to the house, and Dick did not urge it any further.

A change of clothes was quickly laid out for her brother by Gertie and a bath of hot water carried to his room. We gathered from Mr. Curtis that the poor fellow was too exhausted to speak much on his way home, though he had virtually told his father all that had happened since he left. Dick and Joss had picked up the saddle where the dying horse was lying (he was nearly dead then) and rode steadily until they got to the border. When they arrived there, Dick sent Joss forward to find out, if possible, about the cattle. Joss was away a night and a day, and when he returned he had actually found the beasts. Dick thought it would be all plain sailing, and that he would only have to take his cattle and return, for it happened that Joss belonged to the same tribe, and that was how they so luckily fell on the scent. If another tribe had had the cattle it is certain they would never have been found, but as it was they crossed the drift at Masupu and rode straight to the chief's place. He was very surly, and refused to see them for a long time, but one of the chief's advisers came out, and Dick told him his case and pressed a sovereign into his hand. The effect was marvellous. The chief sent for Dick at once, also for Joss to interpret. After a long and apparently futile discussion the chief asked Dick whether he had any guns or ammunition for sale, going away from the point, and appearing to be trying to gain

time, so that the thief might be able to get the stock away, perhaps to the mountains, where it would be impossible to follow them.

At last Dick said, "Chief, listen to my words. I am a poor man; these cattle are all that I possess, and are the savings which I have earned by the sweat of my brow. This man (Joss), who belongs to your tribe, says he knows the thief in whose possession the cattle are at the present moment, and to prove his words we will go and pick them out of any of your great herds." The chief became interested after a while, and sent for the alleged culprit, Joss going with three natives who were told off to bring him up. When the man was brought in he protested loudly at being accused as a thief before the whole tribe, and, in fact, threatened Dick that he would not get out of Basutoland as easily as he had come in. His pass, too, showed that the cattle had been fairly bought; in fact, he had a witness to prove where he had bought them, and things began to look black for Dick, who, however, spoke up and said, "Listen, you chief of the Basutos. This man is a learned man, whose tongue is full of oil, and he speaks lies. I have many oxen and two wagons at my farm, and I will now assign over to you, as your property, all that I possess if this man will go with me and show me the place where he bought those cattle. Let some of your men go with me to see fair play, and I will pay as many men as you like to send, and feed them too, on the understanding that this man goes straight to the farmer who sold him those six oxen and one cow." This seemed to have an effect upon the chief and his counsellors, and after about ten minutes' consultation the chief said, "Your offer shall be con-

sidered, and the indaba will reassemble presently on the sound of the trumpet."

The chief now invited Dick to have breakfast, which offer was promptly accepted, as he was extremely hungry. The bugle then sounded and the indaba was reopened. Much interest was taken in it, the natives coming from all parts of the mountain at the sound of the call, and when they heard what the indaba was about the excitement was intense. After a pause the chief stood up and said, "I think that you have made a very fair offer. I shall send one of my indunas and twenty men. Your terms are accepted, and if this man is in the right we shall act on your words, to which all these witnesses can testify. If, on the other hand, this man is found to be the thief, he shall pay you ten head of cattle, and I shall distribute the remainder amongst my people—the man himself receiving such punishment as he deserves. My men will start at daybreak to-morrow." Dick thanked the chief for his fair and just way of dealing with the affair, and withdrew, but as he had nowhere to stay, the chief gave him the use of a hut next to his own. The horses were taken charge of by the chief's men, Joss settling himself to sleep by a fire just outside Dick's hut. As he lay there a Basuto came up and said that he wanted to speak to the white man inside on a very private matter. As Dick had not fallen asleep, he overheard the remark, and called out to him to come inside, telling Joss to come with him.

The man went in, and began beating about the bush, as natives generally do when they wish to talk about something important. The long and short of the matter was this. The man whom Dick had accused of being a thief had sent this native to pray

the white man to see the chief and ask him not to send the expedition, as he would deliver up the cattle and pay all costs up to date. While he was speaking a message also arrived from the chief, calling Dick at once, and when he came to the indaba hut again there was the scoundrel, who, despite all his big talk, was now kneeling before the chief, who began, "Here is the man whom you accused of stealing your cattle. He now confesses his crime, and your cattle shall be at my kraal gate, together with a fine of four head for causing you all this trouble, and with a view to warning other would-be thieves. Now, instead of going with my men, you will be able to leave with your own cattle and four more."

Dick did not hear what was to be done to the native, but he knew that he would be most severely treated. He departed that night, leaving Joss to come on the next day with the cattle. "You see now," the old man concluded, "how much trouble we have to contend with in the way of cattle-stealing. I consider that Dick was very lucky in getting his cattle again, for if the old nigger (Joss) had not turned up when he did we should never have seen them again.

We now turned our attention once more to the preparation for our trek. The wagons were all carefully examined, and nothing seemed to pass Dick's keen eyes. I heard him remark that he would have to go to town in the morning about the goods. We examined the stock; everything seemed in good order, and we were all in high spirits again. Dick was, however, very emphatic in expressing his sorrow for his favourite horse, which made me feel less happy. Joss was expected to turn up some time on the morrow, as Dick had written

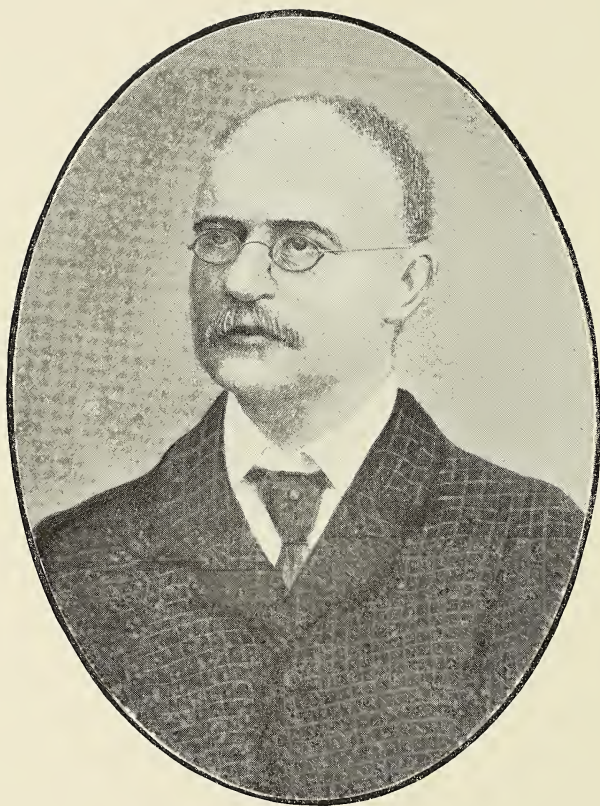
a special pass for him to show the owners of the farms crossed by the bridle-paths, thus saving a lot of valuable time. Next day we all three rode into Kimberley, old Curtis leaving us at Hill & Paddon's store, where Dick purchased most of our goods, such as blankets, shirts, soldiers' tunics, hatchets, knives, all kinds of wire, beads, looking-glasses, bales of print, salt, sugar, &c., the whole appearing to me to amount to an enormous quantity. Mr. Curtis met us again at three o'clock, and as he had finished his work, he returned home before dusk. Dick and I went to a boarding-house for the night, and all next day we were very busy until nearly sundown, when, as it was too late to go to the farm, we stayed another night at the same place. Next day we branded the six prodigals, as well as the four new oxen. As these were old cattle and the farm was not fenced, Mr. Curtis thought it best to sell them, as they would always be trying to return to their home, and would perhaps lead some of the other stock away also. They were therefore sent straight away next morning, Dick following them up on horseback and returning in the evening, having sold them to a butcher at £7 10s. a head, which was considered a good price. He also told us that he had passed the wagons bringing out our goods, and they would probably be in by the morning, as all transport riders drive their oxen by night as much as possible. Next day, however, the wagons had not arrived, but on going to the ridge we could see them on the road about a mile away. There were three altogether, and they drove up to the farm about eight o'clock. Three of the largest rooms were cleared of furniture to make space for the goods, and the house was like a hive of busy bees for the next few days. All the stuff,

with the exception of the salt, sugar, and bales of beads, was unpacked and put into the rooms, the cases acting as tables, while the other goods were put on a sail alongside the wagon, ready to be loaded. Thus two of the transport wagons were soon unloaded and ready to be sent back, the other being kept back for some reason or other.

We worked until nine o'clock that night, marking and checking the goods; and then Dick took two lanterns, saying that he was going to unpack the loaded wagon at once. I helped him, but there were no Kaffirs about, and I very soon found out why, also the reason for the false wagon bottoms, which we secretly packed full of muzzle-loading guns, powder in tins, and percussion caps. The two wagons must have been laden with fully two hundred guns, if not more. Dick carefully screwed the planks down and retired for the night. Next morning we commenced to pack up such stuff as salt, and all heavy goods. The work of marking and checking occupied the next two days, and I did not feel at all sorry when the tedious job was over.

The note that was found in the cave when Dick's horse met with the mishap that caused its death was kept very quiet, and Dick took good care that the police should not have an opportunity of arresting the writer and his friends. This would have meant some few days at the court, and if the case had gone for trial, we should have been delayed perhaps two months or more, which might have resulted in the abandonment of our trading trip. The day after we found the note, Dick managed to reach a friend's farmhouse, and in the evening the question of sheep-stealers naturally came up for discussion, as all the farmers were losing stock very heavily and matters

were getting worse. He and his friend between them made out the note, also the names of the writer and the addresses. Next day Dick quitted that farm and went on to a neighbouring one, where there were four strapping sons. A plan was soon resolved on, and in a few days the two native thieves were caught and brought before a J.P., who ordered them fifty lashes apiece, and to receive ten lashes every day until they confessed who the other men were. The same day they gave in all the names, and two days later the whole lot were captured and taken to Bloemfontein, where they were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Thus was a gang of sheep-stealers completely broken up, and that without much fuss or bother.



MR. HOFMEYER.

CHAPTER IV

TRADING IN GREAT NAMAQUALAND

We start—A halt at Griquatown—Upington and Zwart Modder—Our difficulties commence—Chief Witbooi is friendly—Across the desert—Terrible experiences—Water at last—Among the Korannas—A friendly reception—Dick's practical joke—Our first attempt at trade—Good business—Off again—A little buck-shooting—An attempted raid—Our assailants foiled—Rietfontein to Ghose—In German territory—Chief Zolma of Himyrob—Our hospitable entertainment—Female slaves, a compulsory selection—Another attempt on the camp—We give Zolma the slip—On the homeward turn.

ON a Monday we made our final preparations. Joss and March were drivers, two of the farm picaninnies were leaders, and we had an old Hottentot, Klaas, as a reserve driver, who was to act as cook until wanted in the former capacity. Klaas could also speak three or four different dialects, and was appointed interpreter. We had a goodly stock of provisions, tinned meats, &c., biltong (dried meat) and rusks, also a shotgun and rifle, with a thousand rounds of ammunition for each.

At daybreak the next morning we bade farewell, a very touching episode, and one on which I need not dwell; suffice it to say that I was glad when we were on our way. That morning we just got over the hills, and waited until the heat of the day

had passed, starting again about four o'clock and travelling till midnight. Then a three-hours' rest, and on again until an hour after sunrise, when, coming to a large vlei of water, we stopped until about four. Wild-fowl were plentiful, and, quitting camp with our guns about half an hour before the wagons were ready to go forward, it was not long before our saddle rings were stuffed with them. We did not ride our horses much, however, as we did not know when we should really need them. Eight days' travelling brought us to Griquatown. We had been going at the rate of twenty-five miles a day, and could have gone faster, but were anxious to save the oxen for the journey through the desert as much as we could. The beasts were very awkward at first, but by this time had settled down to their work, the freshness and fractiousness having been knocked out of them by the heavy loads and bad roads (a better term would be "tracks," as in some places it seemed impossible to get a wagon over them without mishap of some kind). Griquatown was a miserable place in those days. There were a few whites, and we could count six stores, the native population being largely composed of Griquas, a dirty, yellow-looking people, whose language consists chiefly of clicks. A policeman met us at the outspan, to see who and what we were, and learn our destination. Having satisfied him that we were traders bound for Namaqualand, he departed. Afterwards two policemen came over and spent a few hours with us. They told us theirs was a terribly lonely life, traders very rarely coming that way; in fact it was like being buried alive to live in such a place. They seemed good fellows enough, and we got very friendly and spent a cheerful evening at the camp until midnight.

Our next calling place was Upington on the Orange River, which took us twelve days to reach. Our oxen began to get footsore, as the sand was in some places as much as a foot deep and burning hot. We were again visited by the police, who soon made themselves agreeable, and of course we were invited to dine at the camp, and gladly accepted. It is almost needless to say that we spent a jolly time together, but were poorer by a whole case of whiskey when we left. The drift where we crossed the Orange was in fairly good condition, but the river was high. Dick's face wore a worried look as he saw the bottom of the wagon under water, but we crossed without any serious mishap, and about a mile from the banks pitched our camp, where we stayed for six days to rest. A quantity of bushes were cut down and made a sort of zareba or wall round the wagons. We had to shoe the cattle all round, no light task, but we had a lot of old worn horseshoes, which, cut in two, were just the thing.

What a delightful free-and-easy life it was! just the thing I had been longing for ever since I could remember. No more worrying to get to business to the minute. No uncomfortable starched shirts and a hundred other things that could be mentioned as drawbacks to the enjoyment of life. No newspapers, with startling headlines of terrible disasters, or of war-clouds gathering in the West or East. No rigid rules of punctuality. If we did not reach a certain place on Monday, the following Monday would do just as well. We got there, and as long as our point was gained, what did it matter about time?

We struck camp and left the beautiful Orange River behind and headed towards Zwart Modder. Here we experienced our first difficulties about water,

but by driving the animals through the heat of the day managed to get to a watering place. I may here mention that it is a great mistake to outspan oxen in the veldt, miles away from water. The only method is to push on until water is reached, even if one or two animals drop by the way. Zwart Modder is the principal town of Korannaland, the chief, Witbooi, being a very decent sort of a fellow. He seemed a kind of Hottentot, or yellow man, and was held in great respect by the tribe. At this place we had to prepare ourselves for the long journey across the desert, which was looked upon by many travellers as a death road. When once over that we could consider ourselves fairly safe, though after it came another long stretch of road to a place called Kuis, a small Koranna village near the Molopo River, a distance of about 150 miles and without water.

We paid a visit to the chief of Zwart Modder, who received us courteously. There were about a dozen armed men round about the inside of the large hut, and a few outside, and I noticed that most of them had Snider rifles, and belts well filled with ammunition. Dick had brought a watch and a handsome blanket as a present to the chief, and these, it could be plainly seen, had a very good effect. Besides giving us permission to proceed and trade through his country, the chief arranged to send four armed men as an escort and to show us the right road. He also invited us up that evening to have a chat. Dick knew very well what this implied, and took two bottles of Cape brandy, which were received with sparkling eyes by the chief himself.

Dick was an old stager, and knew well what he was about, but I was surprised when I heard him ask the chief if he could get a load of melons. This was

readily promised, but it seems that it would cost us a case of twelve bottles of brandy. The bargain struck, we retired.

Dick explained to me that these water-melons afforded us our best, perhaps our only, chance of getting across the desert. Next day we were busy transferring more than half of the goods from one wagon to the other, to make room for the load of melons which were to arrive by sundown, as the party sent to gather them had left in the morning early.

We had to make a rail of reeds four feet high round the wagon to prevent the melons rolling off, and transferred six oxen to the more heavily loaded wagon. We rested all the next day until sunset, having taken leave of Witbooi about four o'clock. True to the chief's word, four men were mounted and ready as escort, and nearly the whole village came to see us off. I was amazed at the shape of the Koranna women, who certainly needed no dress-improvers, Nature having liberally provided against them.

It was a good thing that we had guides, as we could scarcely see the road, especially with night coming on. Still, we trekked on until midnight and then slept for three hours; then on until daybreak, when we turned out the cattle to graze until sunset and rested ourselves. The guides returned that morning at daybreak, and Dick gave the oxen half a melon each before inspanning, but they only licked at the fruit and walked away. We did not throw the melons away, but Dick ordered them to be put back on the wagon, saying the beasts would be very glad of them before twenty-four hours had passed. We travelled at a steady rate, the road being in places very sandy, and the oxen straining at the yokes. The melons were again thrown to them, and

this time were readily eaten. Still the animals were not satisfied, but kept hanging about the wagons, licking the yokes, also the wheels. They would not eat the grass, which was terribly dried up and looked like the stubble of a parched wheat-field. The heat was dreadful, and our cattle roamed restlessly about from one place to another. We could not rest very much ourselves, and were glad when the sun went down so as to enable us to get on. We now gave each ox half a melon and started again. The sand on this night's march was up to the hub of the wheels in some places, but still we struggled on till daybreak. By this time the poor beasts were beginning to look very thin and miserable, with their eyes wide open, and their tongues hanging out of their mouths. A whole melon each was allowed them at the next halt, and we had to drive them from the wagon containing the fruit, or they would have torn down the reed railings round the cargo. Luckily there was some stunted bush about, where the animals could lie down, and they were fairly well shaded from the sun, except at midday, when another half-melon was given them. This they seemed to relish wonderfully. How can I describe the awful desert we were now crossing? As far as the eye could reach, nothing living was to be seen; not the chirp of bird or insect to be heard. There was an unbroken, awful, death-like silence. That night, as the road appeared to be freer from sand, we made good trekking, and must have gone many miles before sunrise. How piteously did those poor cattle look at us! Our own barrel of water would not hold out longer than the next day, though we had been on short supply for the last two days, and our horses were nearly as thirsty as the cattle.

The boys, too, began to murmur that we had come the wrong road, and the Hottentot was saying that if we got no water directly he should march back again, as he was not going to die like a starved dog. Dick nipped this mutinous talk in the bud. Going up to him, he said, "Klaas!" "Yes, Baas." "If you attempt to leave this wagon I shall shoot you as dead as I did that buck the other day. Now you know what to expect!" This was short and to the point, but Dick's words had a marvellous effect on the other servants, who had also shown signs of discontent.

On the morning of our fifth day in the desert our water was quite finished, and we had only a dry feed that evening before spanning in. We had no water, as I say, but we got coffee next morning, for Klaas pounded two melons to pieces and squeezed the liquor through a piece of cloth. It was the most miserable day we had spent, and the cattle fairly tormented us. They no longer looked at us piteously, but with big, round and fierce eyes, and their tongues were protruding, cracked, bleeding and hard. They had been trying to eat the stubble-like grass, only to cut their tongues, and the sight of their bleeding mouths was sickening. They walked round the wagons, bellowing in a low, unnatural way, as if in dire pain. How that day passed I know not; but we had a hard task to span them, for they seemed nearly mad. After the first outspan (midnight) we had to leave one ox on the side of the road, as he was not able to walk any further; and just as the day was breaking down fell another, which had also to be abandoned. We did not unyoke the cattle at daybreak, as we had been accustomed to do, but, transferring some of the goods

from one wagon to that on which the melons were loaded, so as to lighten it a bit, we pushed on. In the far distance, on the horizon, we could distinguish some bush; and this was what we were making for, if only to get our now knocked-up oxen to shelter. A little after sunrise the poor beasts could pull no more, but lay down in their yokes. We tried our best to get them up, but it was no use, so unyoked them. Finding themselves loose, they now stood up, and we drove them forward as fast as possible, but it seemed to us a snail's pace. We had to leave our wagons standing in the road, Klaas, one leader and I being in charge, while Dick, the two drivers and one leader took the cattle and went forward. I watched them disappear among the bush. How desolate everything looked, and how miserable! I waited impatiently, expecting to see the cattle or some one at sunset, but not a soul appeared, so the boys and I gathered a large heap of scrub, and, taking turns, kept up a fire until daybreak. Still no one turned up, the water and melons were all finished, and we were nearly famished with thirst. I broke open a case of condensed milk, and opened a tin. I swallowed some, but it made me sick, and I felt still worse, and the two boys were in the same plight. What was to be done? I next opened one of the large cases and found some vinegar. This was somewhat better, and we drank between us a whole bottle. Meanwhile we imagined all sorts of things; possibly our party were killed by bushmen, or perhaps they had been lost and had perished.

Our fears were stayed by the little guide turning up just after dark, carrying a goat-skin of thick milk. Not a question was asked until we had satisfied our famished selves. After a while the little fellow

told us that after they entered the bush and had gone a long way on, the cattle snorted, and, smelling water, ran on stumbling and half blind, following their leader like a flock of sheep until they came to a stream, into which they all dashed. Luckily it was shallow, or they might have been drowned. They laid themselves down and drank, blowing themselves out until they looked like ewe sheep. The "Baas" had tried to stop them, and one of the oxen tossed him into the water. Dick, however, got up quickly, and did not seem to be hurt.

"About when the sun was there," said the boy, pointing to the centre of the heavens, "they came out of the water. They would not be driven out before charging Joss and March several times. They ate a little and then lay down on the grass; then the Baas walked up to the ridge and saw some more cattle and walked towards them. There were some Korannas in charge of them and I thought they were going to shoot us, as they had bows and arrows. But the Baas, who had his gun with him, went towards them and tried to hail them, but they all walked off together and did not return until late, when about six men came, one carrying the goat-skin of milk which I have brought. Just before I left the Baas, I heard Joss saying three of the oxen from his span would die from drinking too much water."

I asked the picaninny if Dick would return that night. He did not think so, as when he was a long way on the road he turned round and saw the Baas and the other men returning by the way they had come. The horses and cattle were kept in the valley, Joss and March looking after them.

I slept soundly that night, and did not awake until I heard Dick's welcome voice. He had ridden up

and was leading the other horse, and called to me to bring the saddle and mount at once. He told me that he had seen the chief of this district and after a lot of humouring found him not a bad sort, for after some palaver he sent two spans of oxen to pull the wagons to the village. As to our own oxen, he could not stop them from rushing into the river, neither could he drive them out again. They drank so much water that that morning four of them were dead, and all the rest sick. We were thus somewhat in a fix. I jumped on the horse, leaving Klaas and the two picaninnies, giving them strict injunctions not to leave the wagons, but to stick on top and see that nothing went astray. About two miles out we met the Koranna's cattle, and they looked fat and sleek, splendid beasts indeed. Joss and March had left our own oxen in the valley, as there was no fear of their straying or being driven away for the next few days. On arriving at the village we were met by the whole tribe, who chanted a sort of shrill song, commencing in high tones and so gradually declining, until it ended in a low chant. The scene was very strange and picturesque. There were about five hundred people assembled, and we at once went into the chief's courtyard, where he received us very kindly. Dick, however, would not allow the horses to be off-saddled, but handed the reins to a boy, saying the wagons would be there directly. The chief had killed a goat early that morning which was roasted in our honour, and we were taken into an inner yard where the women-folk had prepared the meal for us. This was served on dried hides on the ground; our plates were made from the rinds of dried gourds, and were both clean and useful. We could not converse very much,

for the Koranna language is very difficult, being largely composed of clicks. The chief sat at one end of a big skin, with Dick and myself on either side of him. He had a large knife, and with this he hacked off a chunk of meat for each of us and a larger piece for himself. The rest was taken by the slaves into another inner court, where members of the chief's family were sitting. Some Kaffir millet beer was brought to us, also some sweet milk, and it need scarcely be said that as we were very hungry we did full justice to the primitive but ample banquet.

The repast finished, we pulled out pipes and tobacco, and Dick filled his pipe, lit it and handed it to the chief, an action which pleased the old gentleman greatly. After this we passed an hour sketching in the sand and describing the route by which we had arrived, the Chief being much interested. He was still more interested to hear about Witbooi, who, it appeared, was at loggerheads with him, but the great desert that stretches between them prevented much raiding on either side.

Presently we got our horses and rode out to meet the wagons, which were not very far off now. We selected for outspanning a nice piece of ground, about four hundred yards from the village, choosing this spot for many reasons. The chief wanted us to put our wagons in his kraal; Dick, however, thanked him many times for his kindness, but said a little distance from the village would be better, as we should be nearer the river or spruit.

Klaas was soon down at the river and brought us up some water. Then very quickly he had a crowd of inquirers about him, as he was the only one of our party who understood the Koranna language. He had, however, been previously warned not to tell

too much to these kind but curious inquirers. Leaving Joss and Klaas, we took March and the two picaninnies with us to the cattle in the valley. They were in a terrible plight, and only three out of the whole lot were grazing. I counted four dead, all blown out to a huge size, but we were helpless, and all we could do was to let things take their course. Whether the animals all died or lived, that was our luck, as Dick put it, and for the present, therefore, he decided not to interfere with them in any way. The two little boys were told to skin the dead oxen and March was to look after the survivors. Some Korannas had been watching us ; and so soon as they saw the boys commence skinning the dead beasts they came to their assistance, and in less than an hour not a piece of flesh was left in the valley. The Korannas took the lot to the village, but, of course, left the skins, which were of value to us.

“That’s six oxen gone,” said Dick ; “we shall have to work hard to make that up. I think we will rest to-day and to-morrow, and in the meantime I shall tell Klaas to get some runners and send them out into the surrounding country to let the people know that a trader is here, and then you will see the fun begin. In the meantime I’m going to ‘salt’ the old man (meaning the chief). You watch me carefully, and you will know presently what to do when you are ‘on your own.’ You saw me give him my pipe to-day. Well, I nearly always have one or two cheap pipes in my pocket, but with the fix we were in I had forgotten all about it, so that I had to give him my own pipe, which cost me 4s. 6d. in Kimberley. I saw the look on his face when you lit up ; he felt as though he would like to snatch the pipe from your mouth, and it’s a wonder he didn’t. As I

knew you did not understand these creatures, I had to part with my good old pipe. You see I am bound to keep in with the old man at any price."

We walked towards the wagons, where quite a crowd had gathered. Joss had been on the alert, and I noticed all the straps, skeys, riems and yokes were carefully packed away, and the wagons were standing quite close together. I never heard such a noise in all my life, men and women screaming and talking, or clicking, at such a rate that you might think you were in the midst of a crowd of cannibals thirsting for your blood, instead of among comparatively harmless savages. The women amused me most by chanting and dancing, as they call it; this, however, is little more than jumping about and putting the head and body in such ungainly attitudes that I could not help laughing outright. That pleased them greatly, and very soon about twenty of these damsels were jumping about to a weird chant for my especial delectation.

Dick had climbed up to the wagon and called me inside the tilt or tent and filled my pocket with sweets. "Now," he said, "you go and give those girls a few sweets each, and if they don't astonish you by their delight and gratitude, I'm mistaken." I looked at him, but could not make out what he meant; but I was very soon to fathom his little joke. I advanced and handed the first girl a few sweets. She knew what they were, as traders had been there before, and she uttered some word with about four clicks in it and the rest of the band all made a rush for me. I was just in time to draw out a handful, and threw the sweetmeats beyond their reach. They rushed to pick them up, and I then emptied my pocket on the ground and ran for the wagon, where

I found Dick shouting with laughter at my expense.

"The very last time I was here," he said, "that big girl there (pointing to a strapping wench who was naked with the exception of a loin cloth) picked up my friend Jimmy and cleared with him right into the village, with all the other girls after her. They eventually came back, and so did little Jimmy, but he had a frightened look, and every time I teased him about it he got wild and said I ought to know better. I threatened to tell his lady friends that he had allowed himself to be carried off by a Koranna girl, and then he would walk away and not speak to me for a whole day."

"So you expected to see the same fun again, did you?"

"Yes, and made certain of it directly I saw that girl come straight for you. By Jove! she's coming now!" And in fact the whole troupe were now dancing towards the wagon where we both sat watching them, till suddenly they all stopped. We looked round to see the reason, when we observed our friend the chief, who had just emerged from the kraal and was strutting towards us, followed by about a dozen of his headmen and councillors. The girls disappeared as if by magic into the valley towards the river, while Dick, on seeing the chief, slipped inside the wagon and hid both his rifle and shotgun, also the cartridges. Then, taking a screwdriver, he jumped on the other wagon, which luckily had still the reed railings round it; and, unscrewing one of the planks, took out a trade gun, a small tin of powder, and a box of caps. Hastily closing the plank again, he had just stepped on to the tent wagon when His Majesty came up.

Dick now said to our Hottentot, "Klaas! tell the chief what my words are: I present him with this gun, powder, and caps as a token of friendship, also this jacket (a soldier's red tunic) and a sheath knife. These things I ask him to accept, and I hope that our friendship will last until the sun ceases to rise over yonder. I have not yet unpacked my goods to sell to his people, but I shall do so after to-morrow. We are all still very tired, and need rest after our long journey through the sand."

The chief seemed very favourably impressed, and in reply to this speech, said, "Friend and white man, I have seen you before, and you have been welcomed by myself and people. I again welcome you, also your young friend" (pointing to me). "Yes, I will accept the presents offered to me, and shall do all in my power to assist you; and further, if any of my people insult you I hope you will tell me at once, and I will punish them. My heart is very sore to see your oxen so sick, and also to hear that some have died; but my people have plenty of stock, and your wagons, I see, are loaded with goods. I have sent my runners, as you requested through your servant, to different parts of my country. I again say welcome." With this he stretched out his hand, which Dick shook heartily. He observed the same ceremony with me.

This, then, was the formal way of introducing ourselves as traders to the tribe, which is virtually the custom all over Africa. One of the chief's councillors picked up the gun and tunic, it being beneath the chief's dignity to carry any presents personally. We spread skins on the ground and got out our camp-stools, and before many minutes were all talking merrily, Dick giving each of the councillors a large

knife and sheath, much to their delight. Then he produced a large tin of snuff, all taking an enormous pinch with a grunt of satisfaction. A bottle of "Dop," or Boer brandy, was next brought out, each native receiving a small tot. The whole party then left us, apparently in high spirits, but before they left they said that their cattle would be gathered together on the morrow ready for our selection.

We began the next day by having a bath in the spruit, where the water was about five feet deep. It happened that this was the time the women came down to fill their vessels for the day. Still, we paid no heed to them or to their manifest amusement at our proceedings. We felt very much refreshed by our ablutions, although it was not altogether pleasant to bathe with so many eyes upon us. After this we placed the light wagons in a position somewhat like the letter L, so that by linking the trek-chain with yokes from one wagon to the other they formed a triangle. We then pulled out the large wagon sail, and with packing-cases and bales improvised a counter. Thus, while transacting our business—when we knew there would be a rush—the natives would not be all around us, hampering our operations and possibly pilfering. Each man was told off for certain work, and the two picaninnies were to mind our own oxen. Of these, fortunately no more had died, and the survivors were getting stronger, and now wanted attention, especially if many cattle were brought into the village.

Dick was to do all the buying, while I was as yet only to look on and keep my eyes about me; for these people are born thieves, and it is natural to them to steal. Klaas was the interpreter, Joss had to mark all cattle and goats, the former by putting a spot of

tar on the forehead, the latter by cutting the top off the left ear. March was the gatekeeper at the kraal or yard lent by the chief, and was to see that no cattle left it when once marked, no matter what the excuse.

That evening some natives came in with cattle, about ten head, ready for business on the morrow. We were up before daybreak, got out about thirty guns and put them out of sight under a sail, also some powder and caps. Then we unpacked knives, hatchets, sickles, beads, blankets, copper wire, fancy prints, pearl shirt-buttons, and numberless articles, all of which were kept in their respective cases or bales.

A little after daybreak the fair, for I can call it nothing else, began. We were kept busy until sunset, when we refused to do any further business until the following day, and so we kept it up for four days. An English firm, in fact any ordinary business man, would sell thousands of pounds' worth of goods in the time, but with these people it is entirely different. It takes an hour to sell five pounds' worth of goods. Still our profits were very high, a clear 100 per cent. and more on the guns, which I afterwards learnt were a lot of confiscated old Tower muskets. These are the same guns of which I have heard it said it would be safer to stand in front of such dangerous weapons than behind them. Anyhow we sold each one at the rate of a large ox or two small ones, which, if we could bring them safely to Kimberley Market, would be worth from £5 to £7 10s. each. On the other hand, one must remember the dangers of the desert we had to cross, and I think the reader will admit that for the risks we ran and the hardships we had to go through we deserved to be well paid, and it

was not for want of trying on our part if we did not succeed.

On the fourth day at noon we had transacted about all the business there was to be done at this place, and in the afternoon, therefore, we packed up everything securely in the wagons, with the intention of having a quiet day on the morrow and collecting our stock so as to be ready for a forward movement. On counting the cattle we found there was one short, and as we knew it would be useless to try and get it back, had to bear the loss with smiling faces. However, we had a nice little herd. Our four days' business had brought us 38 head of cattle, 37 oxen and one cow, the latter having been bought expressly for milk on the road. We had also traded 16 goats, which we managed to exchange at the rate of four for an ox. This brought our total up to 42 head of cattle obtained in four days' trading and at only one place. Our next sojourn was on the other side of a desert about seventy miles across, without any water. Taking, therefore, a load of water-melons, we spanned in our new cattle, which were all quite fresh and fat. Our old cattle had also improved wonderfully and were fit to travel, but rather weak to be put under the yoke. The old chief tried his very best to buy one of the horses, and even offered as many as six oxen for it, but Dick would not sell, and it will be found afterwards that he had good reasons for keeping by us two good strong horses. We gave the old chief a tin of powder before taking leave, and he insisted upon our accepting a young live goat with us to kill on the road. He also sent with us two men to act as guides for two days. All being ready, we set out a little after sunset, after staying in the place about nine days.

I will not go into the details of that dreadful journey, the mere thought of it still sickens me. Suffice it to say we came to a river on the fourth morning, and this was dry, with the exception of a few pools of water at the sides, so we crossed easily, and formed an encampment on its bank.

It was about one of the wildest spots I have yet seen. A few dull, grim-looking hills rose on our left, and thick bush grew on either bank of the river. Just the sort of place for plenty of game, we thought, it being remote from the reach of civilisation. In an hour we had a fairly thick fence of thorn-trees round our wagons, forming a "scherm" large enough to accommodate all the cattle. As an extra measure of precaution we armed our three men with a muzzle-loading gun each and a large sheath knife, about eighteen inches long, giving the younger boys knives and an assegai apiece. We were now an armed camp, prepared for trouble of any kind whenever it might overtake us. The country was wild and unsettled, and therefore it was as well to be fore-armed in case we were not forewarned. There was no fresh meat in camp, so Dick arranged a hunt. We had barely enough men with us, and were therefore not able to leave camp for any length of time. Starting at break of day, and leaving March and one picaninny to look after camp, with Joss and the other small boy detailed for the cattle herding, Dick, Klaas, and I set forth. Our idea in separating the picaninnies was that if anything happened at camp they, being small, would not be taken much notice of, and would consequently soon be able to slip away and get assistance.

We spread out about ten paces apart, and the bush was so thick that we could actually hear a buck get

up within a few feet of us, and yet not have so much as a sight of him. We had put up thus no less than eight by dinner-time with not a single shot, and disappointed, we crossed the dry river-bed and turned campwards. Much the same thing happened on our return march, but at last Dick got a chance of a shot and brought down a fine bushbuck.

We could not carry the whole carcase, so chopped off the horns, slung the hind-quarters on to a pole, and carried it back to camp, changing about. The burden began to get heavy by the time we got back, as we had tramped about five miles since the kill, and were tired, hungry, and thirsty, but March was prepared for us with a stew of "bully" beef. We had sat down about ten minutes when one of the picaninnies came running into camp saying Joss was killed by some yellow men and the cattle were taken. Needless to say, we were not very long in getting away at full gallop, while our two men had started before our saddles were girthed. We heard the report of a gun and some yelling; and coming to an opening in the bush I saw poor old Joss. He had discharged his gun at some fifteen men at a distance of fifty paces, wounding about nine of them, as the gun was loaded with shot. These were giving forth most unearthly yells, while the others were making a rush for the old fellow. The clatter of our horses' hoofs just at this moment attracted their attention, and they were in rather an undecided mood, or old Joss would have been no more. They did not run until we had dismounted, and I at once let off both barrels of shot into them, while Dick winged either three or four with his rifle by the time I had reloaded. Klaas and March had come up and also gave the marauders their two barrels. This was too much, for they turned and

fled, and as they were running I gave them another two charges. They were nearly out of range, but the shot striking the hind-quarters of the column, very much hastened their retreat. The cattle were only about a hundred yards away in the thick bush, and were soon recovered, none being missing, and we drove them to a more open piece of ground.

Joss had an arrow through his trousers, but as it had not grazed the skin no damage had been done. We now left two men in charge of the cattle with instructions that if anything went wrong they were to fire a shot. In the meantime our camp was left unguarded with the exception of the picaninny, and we therefore cantered back at a good pace. Nothing, however, had happened, and the rest of our dinner was eaten in peace. Dick and the men imagined these people to be some roving band of robbers, such as are found occasionally up the Kalahari way. He did not think it worth while to make any special report of the matter to the authorities at the first place we got to, as, so far as we were aware, there was no state of war between any of the native tribes. Our cattle were still tired, and it was decided, therefore, to stay that night in our thorn fortress, and make a forward movement the next afternoon towards sunset, or a little before, as it would be better to travel through the bush country by daylight if possible.

For the first time we had sentries that night, and kept this practice up for the rest of our trip, the men taking to it readily, all having a good idea of the importance of "sentry-go." An African native would rather do anything than lose his sleep, but even the picaninnies kept awake, making up the fire and talking to the sentry. We each took a spell, and it was amusing to see how eagerly the men watched

us as we loaded the guns for them, so that they would be able to load for themselves afterwards. We had taken things too easily before, as Dick remarked, and had forgotten that we were now in little known and uncivilised lands.

The night and the whole of next day passed off without any further adventure, and just before sunset we went forward. After leaving the bush in the neighbourhood of the river, we entered an unbroken desert country, nothing but sand, sand, sand, for miles and miles the same ! Three days trek without water followed, and then we came upon a spring quite close to the road. We rested here a whole day, and another two days brought us to a place called Rietfontein.

There are not many natives at this place, and we only stayed there two days, trekking thence to Haas, a distance of about ten miles, which were covered in one night. At Haas we stopped one day, and then moved on to Ghose, which was the first village touched by us in German territory, known as Great Namaqualand. Our party suffered much from the sandy road, frequently changing oxen, and it took us six and a half days to reach this place, the villagers all turning out to meet us. The chief at Ghose was a very surly fellow, looking upon us as intruders, and was not at all friendly, making us pay two guns for the right to trade and pass through his piece of country. These we judged it advisable to give, as the natives here seemed rather inclined to quarrel. We made no long stay at Ghose, and were glad to start on our way again. Not much business had been done, three oxen being all we bought, and one goat for our own use. We headed due north again to Himyrob, taking five days. This was a very

pretty little village, with plenty of water and trees, and the natives were more like the Kaffirs. There was also a sprinkling of Koranna people.

Before the wagons reached this village, Dick and I mounted our horses, and made straight for the chief's place. The natives on seeing us were frightened and ran about yelling, and before very long the whole village population seemed to be roused, to the number of a couple of hundred. Dick knew a few words of their language, and evidently made himself understood, as a big strapping native beckoned us to follow him, which we did, making straight for the chief's hut. The noise of our coming had attracted attention throughout the place, and we met the chief outside his hut. Seeing we were friendly, as we carried no guns, he invited us inside, and Dick told him our object, which seemed to please him. As our wagons were nearing the village we asked him if he would show us a place to camp, which he readily did. Instead of sending his men, he came himself, and by midday our camp was formed at a very pleasant spot, all the natives in the village, I think, coming out to look at us. The chief, whose name was Zolma (pronounced with a click) seemed a very decent sort of fellow, rather stunted, with small, sharp, searching eyes, whose word was law.

After we had begun to get settled down in our new quarters Zolma came over. Dick did not give him the chance to demand payment, presenting him at once with a large sheath knife and a gun. He was delighted, and in return sent us a goat-skin of thick milk, and some pumpkins and green melons, which were very acceptable, as we had had no vegetables for a long time. We again made a fence of thorn bushes all round the camp, a wise pre-

caution, as we afterwards found the natives to be great thieves, there being practically no law to stop them. That evening Zolma sent us an invitation to go up and see him, which we did, taking care that none of our men left camp, as was generally the case, one or two getting permission for an hour or two of leave at a fresh village. Dick told them before we left camp to be very careful and let no one enter, no matter what the excuse might be. They were also to take all precautions and to observe our usual tactics in case of danger, Joss, our most trustworthy boy, being in charge.

We left with the chief's messenger as guide, went through various long alleys, and turned round any number of corners. We made a halt at last in front of a reed wall, about ten feet high; here a name was called, and we were admitted through a hole in the wall, which was hidden by a gate made of the same materials. It was rather a large enclosure. On one side was a row of huts with an outlet leading into the compound. This last was empty, save for a few old men squatting round a smouldering fire. At the far corner we stood and looked around us, and it appeared almost as if we had been led into a trap. An attempt to escape would be hopeless, and we were in a tight place if treachery was intended. The guide seeing us hesitate and cast suspicious glances around us, motioned us to follow him. It would have been foolish to show fear, so we accompanied him to one of the large huts and went inside, where sat Zolma and about ten men, whom we supposed to be his advisers.

After greeting us, Zolma said, "White men, my heart is very glad to-day. We know what you have come for. We are in great need of guns, hatchets,

knives, and all that is wanted for use to check some raiders who trouble us much. Their country is over yonder," pointing to Korannaland. "We have had seven times ten of our cattle stolen and four men killed; our enemies also took some of our women. And yet we must sit still in our kraals like children. I have given orders for a dance this evening because my heart is glad, and have invited you as guests. You may each pick out the prettiest girl in the kraal as your slave."

As the chief spoke we could hear a sort of chant in the distance, the sound gradually coming nearer until it was just outside the kraal. Now appeared about a hundred girls, also a number of young men, some seventy in all, armed with knives and assegais. They stopped directly the chief made his appearance, all sinking on one knee as a token of respect; then all springing up together, they formed a circle. Zolma beckoned us to follow him, which we did. "Now make your choice!" he said, waving his hand. We walked along the whole line of girls, some of whom were very pretty, while all had beautiful white teeth. They were smiling and laughing, knowing as they did for what purpose they were assembled. It is a matter of moment for the young girls when the chief makes his choice, and lucky is the chosen one; consequently all try to look their best on these occasions. When they saw us walking in front of them, looking into their merry, mischievous eyes, they smiled, smirked, and chattered. Those we had already passed were mourning their bad luck, and among them were several solemn faces; but as we turned our heads again their faces beamed with delight. They evidently hoped that we would change our minds and choose again. Thus we

walked, proceeding very slowly, until we reached the end of the line.

Zolma seemed very much surprised as we led no maiden forth. "What is the reason of this?" he demanded. "None will suit us," was Dick's answer, and my reply was the same. Zolma walked away in a huff, and as he departed one of the headmen came forward and said to us, "White men, I pray you not to make our chief angry, but do as he bids you; and if you do not want the slaves tell them so when you enter the hut, and send them away. Again I pray you do as our chief bids you. You have insulted him, and he will endeavour in some way to avenge himself. Follow him before he becomes enraged, and tell him you will now make your choice."

After the first dance this we decided to do, to the headman's great delight. We entered the chief's hut, and Zolma greeted us at first with a scowl; but when Dick told him of our decision he smiled very pleasantly and came out again, and the dancing recommenced. It was a very exciting sight, and our nerves were strung to the highest pitch. At one moment we were surrounded by the warriors, all with their spears raised as if to strike us, with glaring eyes and yelling like demons; the next moment they were quietly chanting a melody with the girls in a low, subdued tone, which gradually grew louder and louder until the sound had reached its very highest pitch, resembling more the cries of demons than of human beings. The time was excellent, and they seemed to sing together in machine-like unison. So they kept on for an hour or more, when they all resumed their positions as at the commencement. Zolma now beckoned to us to follow him, which we did, and, passing down the line of girls, who perspired freely

and were out of breath, we picked out two of the ugliest we could see, and they were marched off to a hut. Some millet or Kaffir beer had been prepared, and of this the dancers drank freely, and commenced their gyrations again. Some of them had worked themselves into a state of great excitement, and, thanks to the beer, they grew worse and worse. We drank some of the beer at the invitation of the chief. I thought it horrible stuff, but forced it down, so as to keep on good terms. I began to feel very queer, and told Dick so, who said he felt much the same, but would not suggest retiring, as that would insult the chief, who had provided the entertainment for our especial benefit. I must have shown unmistakable signs of being sick, for Zolma noticed my appearance and suggested that we should retire. He led the way to his own apartments, and we followed, nothing loth, and after a few words on our part, thanking him for the dance, saying how delighted we were, &c., &c., and a warm hand-shake, he ordered the headman to conduct us to our "apartments." He led us to the hut which the two girls had previously entered, and we all three went inside. I closed the door, and we reminded the headman of his promise during the early part of the evening, and said we would give him a blanket if he would conduct us to our own camp.

The promise had its effect, and we were soon back in our own camp, where our men were anxiously awaiting us. They had heard the singing, and as Klaas had told them it was a war-song they had been a good deal alarmed, especially as we had not returned. They were very glad to see us, the more so that they also had a story to tell. The headman impressed on us that if the chief knew we slept

at our own camp that night he would be more insulted than he was before. We therefore promised him that we would not betray the fact, but let it be imagined that he (the guide) had brought us to the camp at dawn. To prove this he could show the blanket which we had given him as a present. Dick handed him one, and he very quickly disappeared. We were very tired, but could not sleep until Joss had told all that had happened in our absence. It appeared that after we had been gone about an hour a party of four or five men demanded entrance to the camp in the chief's name, which was refused. They then threatened to fetch fifty warriors and kill our men and plunder the wagons. Joss and our men showed a very bold front, producing their guns and flashing their long knives, so that the natives held back, not expecting to see armed men. The natives then retired, vowing vengeance on the morrow, as the white men were at the chief's hut and would not be allowed to return. As they departed they added, "We will lay your heads in the dust before to-morrow's sun goes down."

We had escaped a tyrant for the time being, but evidently danger was at hand. Joss's bold front had doubtless saved our camp from being plundered that night, and we determined to be well on our guard on the morrow. There was little fear of anything fresh happening before morn, but to be on the safe side we passed a piece of rope through the bushes and tied each end to our pillows, so that in the event of any one pulling away the thorn bushes that acted as a gate we should be aroused at once. Thereafter we all retired, and slept soundly until daybreak without further incident. The visitors,

finding that they had been foiled, joined the dancers, and remained where the beer was plentiful.

We had visitors before sunrise, the old chief amongst them. He exclaimed with astonishment, and in a half-angry tone wondered that we should be up and about at so early an hour. We explained that it was our custom to rise when the cock crows for the first time, and that by sunrise our first meal would be over, as he could see. It was nearly ready now, the large pot being on the fire, so we invited him to breakfast with us; he graciously accepted, asking us how we had slept. We said "Splendidly," and thanked him for his kindness. He next asked us when we were going to begin to trade. As we were afraid to unpack our goods at this place, we said we should be coming back that way, and would save some goods for his people, but would then sell him ten guns at two oxen each, and would be glad to begin business at once, as we wished to proceed as soon as possible, our journey being a long one. Zolma smelt a rat, I suppose, and sent for two of his chief headmen. When they arrived he talked very seriously to them, and tried to accuse us of breaking our word. We saw his drift at once—he wanted to pick a quarrel with us, but Dick used so much tact that the chief could not find a loophole anywhere, and seeing that we were firm and that our men were armed, he asked our reasons. We told him of our late skirmish on the river-banks with the robbers, and said that for the future we intended to be prepared for any such affrays, no matter where or with whom. This straightforward talk (bluff would be the proper term) had due effect upon Zolma, who now, without further ado, sent for some of his cattle and readily let Dick

pick out twenty oxen, which were traded for ten guns, with a small flask of powder and a few caps to each.

Klaas had been at work all this time, and had got into conversation with one of the tribesmen, and so gleaned the track we ought to follow. We were by no means keen to have a guide, the chances being that we might be led into a trap. The chief made us promise to visit him again and say goodbye at his hut, and then marched off with all his followers. We were very quickly on the move and in less than half an hour were on the road, Klaas driving the loose cattle ahead. We hurried on as fast as we possibly could. Fortunately Zolma's people had no horses, or I am sure they would have followed us, but it was pretty clear that some treachery was intended, as two or three guns were actually discharged at us as we were retreating. Zolma must have felt very small at our prompt measures, and I am convinced that nothing but our speed and decision saved us from trouble with him and his people.

We trekked on the whole of that day, the oxen suffering much from the heat. At sunset a halt was called to let the cattle feed for a spell. Fortunately we were by a stream and had plenty of water. The building of our scherm was a half-hour's work, and we then felt as safe as if we were in a house, with our high hedge of thorn bushes round us. The next day a village was passed on the other side of the stream. All along this stream there were natives, and we did a splendid trade with them, for they were mostly in an independent position and not under the direct influence of their chief. There was no need to hurry over this part of our journey, in fact, our oxen

were rapidly getting fat, as grass and water were plentiful. We got some shooting, game being fairly abundant. Our sport here was principally with duiker-bok, the flesh of which is most palatable. We were now in a lovely country, with plenty of everything, the soil being rich, as the native crop of mealies, Kaffir-corn, and tobacco plainly showed. Our next place of importance was Goxas, where again we did some excellent trading, the people being most friendly, as well as their chief, a very old man, rejoicing in a name not unlike Moses. This was the turning-point of our trip, and we decided not to go any further north.

We had now to cross a very dry piece of country, a distance of about fifty miles, in a south-westerly direction, but as we had plenty of cattle and our wagons were getting lighter, there was not much cause for anxiety. The road was extremely sandy until we had trekked about half-way to Gaamous. There we got into a very hilly country, and our wagons suffered a good deal from the rocky roads, still nothing had broken as yet. It took us three days to reach Gaamous, the population of which was about four hundred, under a decent and civil chief of about middle age. These people were very rich in cattle and goats, and we did a brisk business with them for two days. The natives were troubled very much by leopards, wild dogs, jackals, and, as they averred, lions, and at the chief's invitation we gladly prepared ourselves for a week's hunting.

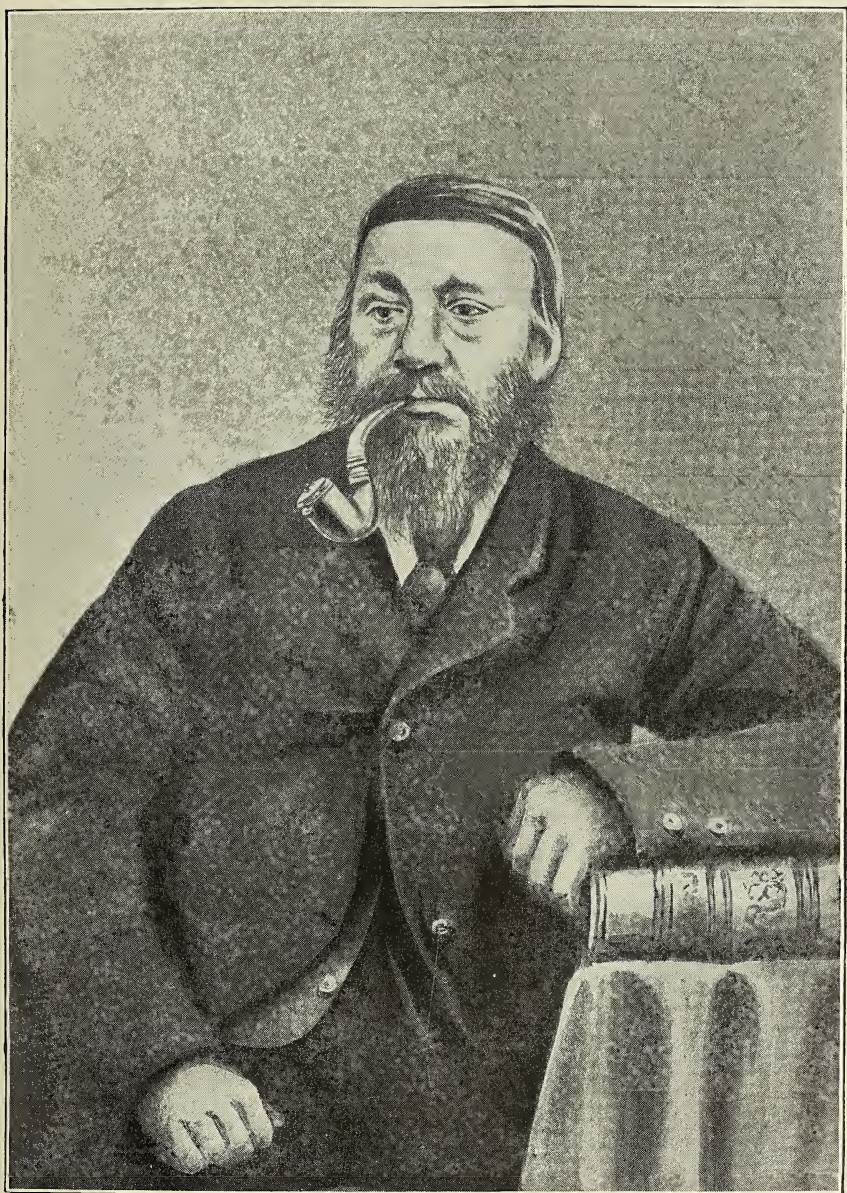
CHAPTER V

HUNTING IN GREAT NAMAQUALAND

A large party—We bag our first leopard—Among the hartebeest—A disturbed night—The leopards' cave—We return to Gaamous—Homeward bound—Back in British territory—More desert experiences—We lose our way—Desperate straits—Water at last—Safe home—A profitable expedition.

GAAMOUS was the name of the chief as well as of the village. I was rather surprised at my comrade arranging to leave the camp for a whole week, but his knowledge of natives was so thorough that he could tell by their conversation and demeanour whether they were trustworthy or otherwise. As Dick afterwards remarked to me, there was as much difference between Zolma and Gaamous as there was between black and white. I tried to differentiate between the two, but with no great success, and as I expressed my feelings one day to Dick he replied, "You will only gain such knowledge by experience—experience which some of us have to pay very dearly for."

Gaamous told off five men to look after our cattle, and directed his sons to see that our camp was not interfered with. As we knew it was better to trust these natives thoroughly or not at all, with the help of ten men we cut down enough thorn bush to nearly



PAUL KRUGER.
(At the age of 41.)

cover our wagons and so left them, taking two pack-oxen for our blankets and spare ammunition and all our men, who were delighted to have a few days off.

The party consisted of the chief and twenty-two men, all of whom carried spears and knobkerries, while fourteen of them had guns. Gaamous was armed with a Snider rifle given him by a trader years before, and with our own party we numbered, all told, thirty-one. We rode our horses and Gaamous bestrode a strong, sturdy little pony, the first we had seen on our travels, and for which he told us he had given ten head of cattle to a Boer trader who had been through the country about twelve months before.

Nothing was seen on the first day out, but the next day one of Gaamous's people managed to start a koodoo, and shot it at ten yards range. That night, when we formed camp, there was great rejoicing at the first taste of game-flesh. Our camp was under a high mountain near some caves, care being taken to keep together and not sleep anyhow and anywhere, as we sometimes did. The mountain seemed alive with wild dogs and jackals, who kept up their howls until daybreak, making night hideous. We looked a big camp, the fires adding a wild appearance to the scene. Around each fire were six or eight men, all sleeping on their weapons, but we posted no sentries, as the chief said there was no fear of robbers attacking so large a party.

The next day was full of excitement. At dawn we advanced in a long line about twenty paces apart through the bush and over boulders. A leopard first attracted our attention, which was quickly speared, but not before one man was rather severely scratched.

Dick directed our boys to stay behind to skin the animal, but they were afraid to do so at first, so we left six men. They could easily have followed our spoor, and we were to breakfast at the first water. A herd of hartebeest now came in our path, and we were quickly in full pursuit, the natives managing somehow to keep pace with our horses. Knowing the game would run in a circle, we closely watched for a short time the direction in which they were heading. Four of us now turned to the right and rode as if leaving the herd. We had gone about a mile when we espied them heading in our direction. Quickly getting under cover, we waited until they were quite close, and so managed to bag three fine animals. The sound of our firing brought up the rest of the party, who were soon busy skinning the dead beasts. We told off two boys to get some water from a spring known to be near, and then camped, the meat being cut up and hung on the trees to dry into biltong.

Some time later our men came up with the leopard skin. As we had no measure, we were unable to take the exact dimensions, but judged the animal to have been some eight feet six inches from tip to tail. The skin was also hung up on a tree to dry, for collection on our way back. For the remainder of that day we rested, smoking and chatting until night, as we intended to go a long journey next day to a place which was said to be infested with leopards.

About an hour after sundown we began to feel sorry we had chosen our camping place so close to the tree on which was hung the meat, as the wild dogs and jackals, attracted by the smell, began to assemble in large numbers. We did not sleep much in consequence; big fires were kept going, and yelling

and fighting went on amongst the animals all night. Once they came too near, and we shot a few, the others turning and eating the wounded ones immediately.

Next day at dawn, although we felt tired after our sleepless night, we made tracks as fast as we could. We started a few bok, but did not kill any, as it would only delay us and there was no time to spare. We reached our destination by sunset, and climbed the mountain in Indian file, until arriving near the top, when on turning a sharp corner we espied a beautiful kloof into which ran a stream of ice-cold water. This had a fall of about sixteen feet, and on the opposite side could be seen some caves, and for these our guides were heading. To get there we had to go under the waterfall and so along the hillside, as the bush was too thick for us to get through the valley. It was somewhat foolhardy to try and get through, as night was coming on. As the leaders got to the first cave a low growl was heard, and the cry came from every lip, "A tiger! a tiger!"* The natives all rushed forward, so we stayed to see the fun and to get a shot, as the caves were only about 150 yards from where we sat. The natives threw stones and spears, but the "tiger" would not show himself. Presently one "boy," a little braver than the rest, walked straight in front of the cave and discharged his gun, apparently full in the animal's face. His bullet was a round stone, and that was blown into sand, and only served to irritate the leopard, for with a yell out he bounded. At his first spring he knocked the man down, and with a second bound he disappeared in the bush. As we did not know when his honour

* The leopard is in South Africa almost invariably called by its Boer name, "tiger."

might pay us another visit, we felt a little concerned about his movements, and made our way hastily round to the rest of the party, who by this time had, with great caution, entered the caves. Twenty men were told off to collect wood fuel, as we should want big fires that night, and four men to pull grass for the horses, as it was now nearly dark and it would be very unsafe to "hobble" or knee-halter the animals. We fully explored the caves before feeling altogether comfortable, as we thought there might be a Mrs. Tiger lurking round somewhere, but made no such discovery, and our minds were fairly easy on that point. The caves were fully eight feet high in front, with rather a narrow opening which gradually increased until we found ourselves in a chamber large enough to contain about fifty head of cattle. There was a beautiful spring of water at the far end, so we made ourselves comfortable for the night, and I began to feel quite an old hunter. Mr. Leopard did not dispute possession with us, and we had a splendid night's rest.

Next day Dick and I shot a very large leopard, quite a ferocious brute, and the natives managed to bag three. We were fairly in a tiger's nest, and judged it prudent to keep our horses within the caves until we returned. We had a splendid day's sport, totalling four leopards and three silver jackals, with only one accident. That was to a native, who in climbing or descending the mountain sprained his ankle. The leopards were skinned where they were killed, and we slept another night in the cave in peace.

We had now had enough of leopard-hunting. It was all right for a couple of days, but it seemed folly to make a long stay, as the old chief intended

doing, for a week or two, or even a month, would mean nothing to him. The more tigers he killed the safer his goats would be. He did not like our proposal to return, as we were his guests, and he expected us to abide his time. Dick, however, was determined, as a week's absence from our stock and wagons was quite enough, and it would be some days before we got back. We therefore left that day, sleeping again by the old biltong tree, this time in peace.

The biltong was packed next morning, and that night we arrived at Gaamous safely, very glad to get back to our desert "home," for his wagon is as dear to the hunter as his ship to the sailor. We found everything as we had left it, which spoke well indeed for the honesty of the old chief and his tribe.

From Gaamous we made due south to Katnashoop, passing Kawim and Kees, and doing a splendid trade. Intimation was received that we were in German territory at this last-named place, where there was a store kept by an old German, who seemed very surprised to see us and looked upon us as intruders. I cannot say if he was doing well or not, as he was absolutely unsociable and very surly. One would think that white men of whatever nationality would be welcomed in such a place by one of their own colour, but not so on this occasion. We gained no information here upon any subject, although Dick tried to get into conversation with the trader. As our wagons got lighter we were able, of course, to travel much more rapidly. All our guns were now sold, which was a great load lifted from our minds as well as our wagons, especially as we had now struck civilisation again, or rather its outposts. In every village passed there was a trader, always of German

nationality, but strange to say we did not see a policeman the whole way. We reached the Orange River just two weeks after leaving Katnashoop, passing through Hurith, Isawisi, Gaiber, Haih, and Whaki. We came to the banks of the river at night, so camped there. At dawn we were up, and as the river was full, had to swim our cattle across, not a very pleasant business, the wagons being pulled over by long pieces of rope, between the desselboom (shaft) and the trek chain. The river is very broad and very thickly wooded on either bank, and we camped here a few days, giving the cattle a good rest, and thoroughly overhauling the wagons. We also had a day's hunting, as fresh meat was needed for the camp, and secured a bush-bok and a male duiker-bok. We had no more rough handling at the hands of the natives, and as we were now in British territory disarmed our own men, promising to give them their guns as presents at the end of the journey.

Herkies to Pella was a fifty-mile pull, with no water, but nothing of much consequence happened on this trek. There was no road, and as we had to make our own way across the veldt we were not able to travel at night. Our destination was Prieska, which was supposed to be in a due easterly direction about 230 miles distant, and to reach which we should have to cross the Hartebeest River, about 110 miles from Palla. We took two large wagon-loads of water-melons with us. Our cattle numbered 754 all told, a nice herd to look after, which was Klaas's job, while Dick and I were cook by turns.

The idea of trekking 110 miles across the desert, with no tracks to guide us, was calculated to create misgivings. Dick now consulted the compass for the first time on the journey, and

counted on reaching Hartebeest River in three days' trek, for as we had plenty of loose cattle we could hurry up as much as we liked. I shall not detail our experiences in this cruel desert. The third day came and the fourth, and still no signs of the end. We examined our compass, and found it pointed anyhow and anywhere. There was only one dread word in answer to our silent queries, and that was "lost." Our water-melons were finished on the sixth day, and still no sign of anything but the long stretches of dry veldt. "It's no use," said our old boy, Joss, "we are completely lost; the cattle are finished," meaning that they were dying from thirst. "We must just save ourselves; what is the use of dying in a desert like a lot of dogs?" Joss's words were but too true; the cattle would not leave the wagon, and the flies were enough to drive them mad.

"No, Joss," answered Dick, doggedly, "we shall not give in to-night; we shall make for the big river, but where? We have been looking for it for six days; we cannot do anything until the sun goes down, and whether we wreck the wagons or not, I shall lead you, and you must just follow me. You can pick out the strongest cattle, and put the yokes on their necks. By to-morrow's sun we shall see something."

Joss replied, "Yes, we have obeyed our master always, but my brother and Klaas were talking of killing an ox, as they must have something to drink or they will die. Dick took his gun, and calling Klaas, asked him to point out the weakest ox. Dick shot it. "Now, my boys," he said, "drink and eat if you wish; you can never say that Dick Curtis murdered his servants in the desert." The men

were so taken aback they knew not what to say, in fact they feared him. There was no more grumbling, and Joss brought some of the warm blood, of which we both took a mouthful.

I asked Dick if he had found out the road. "Don't worry me now. I shall tell you," said he, "in a little time." I could see that my friend was very serious, and I had never heard him speak so sharply before. The circumstances were certainly enough to make one forget ordinary friendly amenities. After all the work, worry, and trouble we had endured, our fine herd of cattle seemed to be going to destruction. The order to span in, given sharply and decisively, was obeyed equally quickly. Then turning to me, Dick said, "You lead the horses; they can scarcely drag themselves along, but have courage. You see those stars there," pointing upwards. "Now, look carefully, and I will point out to you my guide. You see the Southern Cross; well, I am going in the opposite direction—due north—and I hope to be near the great river by to-morrow's sun." Calling out "Follow me," Dick then took a stick and struck out. We appeared as though we were retracing our steps, and old Joss said we were going wrong. As for Dick, he was a changed man from that afternoon; his free-and-easy way of talking and genial smile were gone, and were replaced by curt monosyllables, a sharp look, and a stern, set face. "Do as I bid you, and don't talk to me," he replied roughly. "This is a matter of life or death for us, and I don't want to waste words. Come on!"

Although the wagons were empty, they must now have appeared heavily laden to the weary oxen. Joss's oxen and wagon came first, then March's wagon; following this were the cattle, and I brought

up the rear, leading the famished horses. A halt was called about every hour, Klaas reporting that an ox had dropped on the way, or that two had just fallen out. It was useless trying to get them up again; when an ox fell he was left to his fate. It was a mournful procession, trudging through the desert. Our previous experience of these wastes was nothing to that in this dreadful no man's land. We did not sleep at all, but struggled on all night. The day broke, but we took only five minutes' rest. The sun rose—again the briefest spell. None of the drivers dared to suggest outspanning, though all were worn out and haggard. This was our seventh day in the desert. We strained our eyes, but all we could see was that solitary figure with the firm step well ahead, leading the way. Our eyes were riveted on that man. The sun was beginning to burn fiercely, and another ox fell out, to share the same fate as its predecessors. Looking back, we could see the circling vultures making for their prey, only waiting for the animal to draw its last breath ere they began the work of tearing and gorging.

Suddenly we saw the figure in front stop and beckon us to hurry up. When we reached him we followed his gaze, and could see a small hill about five miles distant, at which the natives were overjoyed. I could not see anything to be excited at, but asked no questions, and trudged on. But, oh joy! I could discern a cluster of huts as we got nearer to the hill. Dick climbed the hill and examined the interiors of the huts, while we looked on with suspicion, but there were no signs of any natives. Were they lying in ambush? We did not know, neither did we care; we only heard the word "Outspan," and the order was quickly obeyed. Dick

came down the hill and said there was no one there at all; all was forsaken, the huts showing no signs of habitation. But still water must be somewhere in the neighbourhood, although the natives had apparently been driven away by its scarcity. We still had strength left to walk over to the other side of the hill, and there surely enough were the water-holes but no water. We went back to the wagons, got all the boys, and took with us two shovels. We dug and found — yes, water, but what dirty stuff! “Go and fetch the small barrel, Joss, and let us fill it, or else the cattle will be down here in a few minutes. We satisfied our apparently unquenchable thirst, filled the barrel, and dug until we had opened up a nice little fountain.

“Now get your whips and a bucket,” said Dick; “hurry up, here come the cattle!” Yes, they had smelt water, and were making for us as fast as they could. They did not take any heed of the whips; we might as well have beaten them with bits of twine. However, we managed to get them about ten buckets of water; then the rush was too much: the oxen tumbled over one another in their frantic haste, and we ourselves scarcely escaped from being trampled to death.

We quickly moved to another place, and again dug for our lives, here also getting a nice flow of water. Hastily making a few holes here and there, the water was not long in filling them. At the sound of the splashing the poor beasts rushed upon us; and we battled as bravely as we could, although we were about exhausted ourselves. However, we managed to drive some of them away after a while, and then two of us went back to the first watering-place. Here two of the cattle

were lying with their legs broken. We got all hands and pulled them aside, and then opened up more water-holes. So we kept at it for about three hours, when we had had the satisfaction of knowing that although the cattle were not satisfied, at all events their lives were saved. By this time we were far too tired to eat, but just laid ourselves down and slept. No one was left to watch the cattle, as we knew they would not wander away but lie about the water-holes.

When Dick and I awoke Klaas had been before us, and a pot of porridge was ready. How hungry we were, and how footsore to boot! But we were soon all stirring again, and after a good meal had another four hours at finding the cattle water. This time we almost satisfied them, and they began to feed. We dug a little deeper, and then made a trench, so as to lead the water from the spring, also forming a small dam, which was quite easy, as the ground was hollowed out by Nature like a soup-plate just below the spring. As the stream was running all that night, there was a plentiful supply by morning. We found on counting the stock that we had lost fifteen head in the desert. What after all appeared to be ending up as a very profitable trip looked a few hours before as if it would terminate disastrously. We stayed here some three days, and then settled that some of the party should ride ahead and find water before leaving this spot with the oxen. Dick and the picaninny left the next day, returning the same night, reporting that they had found the Orange River itself, so we trekked that night, and reached the big river next morning. If we had only kept to the south bank of the river we should have been fifteen

oxen richer, although this route is about six days longer than by cutting across country, but as usual we had bought our experience. We camped by the Orange for a week, getting everything into order again, and this time we decided to keep to the river-bank until we came to Prieska, though we did not know how far we were from either our starting-place or our destination.

A day's journey found us at the junction of the Hartebeest and the Orange Rivers; and five days' more travel brought us not to Prieska, as had been expected, but to Upington. We were very much surprised, as we thought we were much nearer home than that; but we had got out in our calculations altogether. Our friends here were most hospitable and were very glad to see us again, and our cattle were much admired.

Our men now knew the road well enough. There was some little trouble in getting the cattle over the river again, but nothing happened worth mentioning. On our arrival at Griquatown, friends again met us, and I need scarcely mention that another jolly evening was spent together. The talk was principally about the chief Witbooi, who was kicking against the German rulers, and it was feared would break out in open rebellion very shortly. Three months later I heard that an engagement had taken place between the German forces and this chief, but residents in adjacent British territory did not seem to fear, as it was only German rule that Witbooi hated and disputed. We did not stay very long here—a night and a day—and then were fairly homeward bound.

After a trek of some days we reached Curtis's farm a little after midnight, and then what a

commotion! Needless to say, the whole house turned out to see us home again safe and sound. As our men were very tired, Mr. Curtis called in his servants to watch the cattle until daybreak, the kraals being too small to hold them all. They had heard all sorts of rumours about us, brought by some of the Kaffirs who had been at work at the mines, and who, native-like, are always discussing the different things they see and hear. Our expedition had been one of the chief topics of conversation, as traders very seldom ventured into the Great Namaqua country. And so the news spread from one to the other until some of Mr. Curtis's own boys, who had been sent to Kimberley, while making some purchases, overheard what was being said, and gathered from native reports that we were all "eaten up," meaning lost. It may well be imagined how grieved our friends at the farm were, and the surprise we gave them on our return was all the more joyful because of their former anxiety.

There had been no means of communication between us, and as we had been away three hundred and twenty-three days instead of six months, the limit within which we had reckoned to do our business comfortably, they had naturally come to the conclusion that what the natives had heard of us was true. Although we were extremely tired, we kept talking until daybreak, so thankful were we to feel ourselves safely "in port" again. Our troubles and trials were now only alluded to by way of jest. We turned in and slept until nearly midday, and what a beautiful waking it was may well be imagined, after such a long time spent in "roughing it." What luxury to find ourselves on a soft bed between

nice clean sheets, with a roof over our heads! I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was not really dreaming.

"Well, how do you feel?" came from the other side of the room. "What about our fix of fourteen days ago; do you remember?"

"Oh, I do but too well." A hearty laugh greeted my answer, and I could not help joining in. We were overheard, and a female voice called, "Can I come in? It's only me. I've been keeping some coffee hot for you the last two hours. I began to think you were going to sleep till evening; it is now twelve o'clock." The door opened, and Gertie Curtis entered with two cups of coffee on a tray, closely followed by her mother and Alice. How they did talk!—asking one question after another, and hardly giving us time to answer.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Curtis, "what a beautiful lot of cattle you have brought! I have seen nothing of your father since early breakfast; he ought to know them the next time he sees them, for he has been among them ever since. And the servants will hardly do anything but talk to your boys."

"Alice and I have been hearing them," said Gertie; "and I could listen to their adventures all day; but mother called me away; so now we are come to bother you. We will be very considerate, and give you half an hour to dress and half an hour for breakfast, or tiffin rather; and then you must tell us how you have been living for nearly a whole long year."

Mr. Curtis came in just as we were finishing dressing, and bade us good morning with a hearty handshake.

"Well, my boys," said he, "I reckon you have been

doing some good business by the stock out there. I thought you would, for very few people know that country yet. Your old boy, Joss, has been telling me some funny yarns though, and you must have had hard times. And how did you miss the road? I can't think how you came to trek by the wrong road. You had my compass. Is it true that Witbooi is getting ready to fight the Germans? Where did you put in all the time? What do you think of the country?" So he rambled on.

"I say, steady, father; you are in a hurry this morning," said Dick, with a grin. "I'll knock your first trading trip clean out of time, if you'll only give me time to answer all these questions. I suppose you've been storing them up for me the last eleven months."

"Oh, I forgot, my boy; come along and let us have something to eat." After tiffin the whole party of us went to look at the cattle, which were a short distance from the house. It was too big a herd to keep in one place, as we were afraid of sickness; besides, we wanted to turn them into cash. An advertisement was put in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, and in a short time a buyer for a large firm at Cape Town came over and bought 400 head, and a Kimberley firm the remaining 306. I have a copy of our balance-sheet, and a perusal will show the amount of business done and the splendid balance resulting. But it must be remembered that, as with everything else in South Africa up country, great risks have to be taken in a trip of this kind; and whoever reads this narrative will probably admit that our profits were well earned.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
To goods ...	1,346	17	9	By 400 cattle at			
21 cattle died, at				£5 10s. ...	2,200	0	0
£5 5s., and one				306 at £5 5s. ...	1,606	10	0
lost ...	116	0	0	14 left of No. 1			
Wages, 11 months				span			
3 men at £1				12 left of No. 2			
each per month	33	0	0	span			
2 boys at 10s. ...	11	0	0	21 died and			
Food and general				1 lost			
expenses ...	40	0	0	754—Total.			
Profit ...	2,259	12	3				
	£3,806	10	0		£3,806	10	0

For my share Dick Curtis handed me a handsome sum, and I was so well pleased with my first trading trip, that I determined to try my luck on my own account in a little while. I have not attempted to give a description of the Great Namaqualand country, but I hope to do so at a future date, my idea in penning these lines being to describe how trading is conducted in the interior of South Africa. As he continues this narrative the reader will become acquainted with much of which the outside world has hitherto known little or nothing.



CECIL J. RHODES.
(At the age of 27.)

CHAPTER VI

AN ABORTIVE SEARCH FOR GOLD

An unexpected meeting—An equally unexpected proposal—I become a gold prospector—My native guide, Lucas—Crossing the river—A narrow escape—Lucas and his families—A welcome beacon by the way—Rest on the road—The karoo for consumptives—Lucas “at home”—A Griqua girl’s Kimberley experiences—My first spring-bok—A native wedding—Off again—Lucas loses his way—Serious straits—Almost lost—I become delirious—Lucas finds water and food—Among wild natives, a friendly reception—I abandon my search for gold.

“**H**ULLO, hullo, old chap, how are you? Thought you were dead long ago.” The speaker was an old chum of mine, named Johnson, who had spotted me as I was walking up De Beers Road in Kimberley. I had ridden in from the farm that morning on business for Mr. Curtis. We adjourned to a private bar near by, and over a friendly glass I gave him the outlines of my trip.

“Now listen to me for a few minutes; you are just the sort of man I want. I have something good in view, but I cannot manage it by myself; my business prevents me, and to throw up a certainty for an uncertainty is not good enough. It is this: I have got the refusal of a farm, supposed to be gold-

bearing, and situated somewhere up in Bechuana-land. If you will join me and go up and look it over, just say so."

I replied that I was game enough for anything of the kind, so long as "the pieces" were to be made.

"Well," said Johnson, "I have broached the subject; think over what I have said, and if you would like the trip I will make it worth your while. In fact, run into town to-morrow about five o'clock, and then you can come home with me, and we will talk the matter over in the evening."

"Agreed," said I, and we shook hands and parted.

I finished my business and returned. I told old Mr. Curtis that evening of my meeting and the nature of my conversation with Johnson, and asked him what he thought of it. The old gentleman looked me square in the face, and said—

"I'm sorry, but I cannot give an opinion on that sort of speculative business. I have never tried it, but I know many poor fellows who have, but not one do I know who has succeeded. We only read of the successful gold-digger in novels and company prospectuses. But you must use your own judgment; I shall not advise you one way or the other. Dick is going to open a shop in Beaconsfield next month. He says he has had enough of trading, and done so well that he will settle down for a while. But I do not say to you—Do the same. You are very young yet, and a bit of knocking about will do you more good than all the books you can read, and will help to make a man of you. My house will be always open to you, my boy; we shall miss you if you do go, and I shall never suggest to you to leave my house; it is your home as long as you like. Isn't that so, mother?" he added, as Mrs. Curtis came up.

“Isn’t what so?”

“Why, our young friend talks of going somewhere up in Bechuanaland now, in search of a gold-mine, and I’m telling him he is welcome to stay with us as long as he wishes.”

“What?” said Mrs. Curtis. “Have you not had enough of roaming for a while? Bless my soul, you will not be satisfied until the vultures are picking your bones. I’m sure that’s what you’ll come to. Why don’t you look out for a situation? Or there’s old Mr. Hobbs, who wants to sell that little business of his; that would be just the thing for you. You speak Dutch and Kaffir now fairly well. Take my advice, go and see him; it’s only an hour on horse-back from here. As for getting right up there into the wilds, oh, don’t talk any more about it. The last journey quite upset me. And as for being welcome to stop here, why, of course you are.”

I told Dick of the offer when we retired to our bedroom, and he rather favoured it.

He encouragingly said, “You never know your luck in this country; you may strike a reef or a sandhill.”

I made up my mind to go to Kimberley the next day and hear what Johnson’s terms were, so I saddled up just before midday, met Johnson, and went home with him. That night an agreement was drawn up to the effect that in consideration of my going up and looking it over, if the farm turned out a payable gold-mine I should receive so many shares. The quartz I saw that evening certainly looked as if it came from a rich reef somewhere, as gold was plainly visible to the naked eye.

The first thing to do was to obtain a guide, and Johnson at once wired to the owner of the farm, who was living in Barkly West, six hours from Kimberley.

The reply was to the effect that he could obtain the services of a reliable man, and Johnson wired back to engage him, and to be ready to start in two days' time.

Leaving my own horse at my kind friend's farm at Boshof, as Johnson had offered me the pick of his stables, I made preparations for a long journey, and procured a strong military saddle, with large "dees," so as to enable me to carry a small stock of provisions, a combined halter and bridle, one sporting rifle and two hundred rounds of ammunition, a large blanket and an overcoat.

I left Kimberley on a Sunday at daybreak, arriving at Barkly West at midday, and was met at the drift by Mr. Cross, the owner of the supposed gold-farm. He introduced himself, and led the way to his house, a nice little homestead just outside the village. In the afternoon we went to the native location to look up the guide, and entered a good-sized hut where a Griqua family lived. They all greeted us with a hearty "Good morning, Baas!" we were given stools, and the man who had previously told Mr. Cross that he knew that part of the country well, on terms being arranged, said he would make his appearance at daybreak next day, and then we departed.

I was given a rough map, which showed the farm was one bought from the Government and at present tenanted only by a family of natives. I intended buying a little stock of provisions here, and did not wish to lose the early morning ride, as that is the best part of the day for travellers in April. Through Mr. Cross's kindness, therefore, an old friend of his, a storekeeper, agreed to let me have some provisions, the day being Sunday. My stock of supplies con-

sisted of 5 lbs. meal, 10 lbs. biscuits, 5 lbs. "bully" beef, 1 lb. coffee, 2 lbs. sugar (mixed), and some salt.

That evening Mr. Cross explained to me that he had bought the farm, which was 6,000 acres in extent, for a speculation, and without looking it over. Afterwards he went up with a surveyor, and stayed away six months. He was not a judge of gold-bearing properties himself, but he had picked up certain pieces of stone from the surface, and having an idea that the yellow streaks betokened something more than ordinary stone, he had samples crushed and assayed, the results showing that the stone contained gold in large quantities.

As he was getting on in years, and besides had not the capital to work the property himself, instead of keeping the place locked up he had resolved to sell it, provided he got his price, but not as a gold-bearing property—that was to be proved. This was repeated, and great stress was laid on it as an important point. He was selling the farm, the contingent value was for the purchaser to find out.

I was going on a mysterious mission, which might be fraught with immense possibilities, and the thought made me all the more eager to see the place. Johnson had obtained the refusal of the property for a period of six months, and this would give us plenty of time to look round and prospect if we thought fit.

My guide Lucas was punctual the next morning, so I took leave of my host, and as our horses were fresh we were not long in reaching the rather dangerous little river known as the Hartz. It is not very broad, but in the rainy season the strong under-current makes it extremely dangerous, and many a life has been lost, and wagons and oxen have been washed away by this stream. It was here, indeed,

that my own journey nearly ended in a serious disaster.

As it happened there had been a very heavy thunderstorm on the Saturday, and the storm-water had not yet subsided. Lucas asked me, with some apprehension as I thought, if I cared to ford the river, and I lightly said, "Why not? it's only a small spruit, and a little water will do us good; let me show you the way if you are frightened." To this he replied, "Oh no, I am not frightened; only I see you are not a very good horseman, and this is a dangerous river." He then turned his horse's head and, beckoning me to follow him, entered the river. I kept quite close behind him, and when we were a little more than half way across I could see there was a strip of water about nine feet wide bubbling, foaming and rushing along at a tremendous rate. The water was up to our saddles, the horses were snorting, and I could feel mine trembling under me. I shouted to Lucas to use his spurs, and I had no sooner spoken than his horse turned as if to retreat evidently in great alarm. The man pulled him round again and spurred him sharply, but again the frightened beast turned. I then gently touched my horse's flanks. He was trembling like a leaf, and with a snort reared as if to fight the angry waters with his fore feet. His hind legs could not stand the strain of the undercurrent, and he swerved and fell into deep water. The strong current at once carried us away, but luckily I had my feet out of the stirrups as the horse turned over. I heard nothing but the rush of waters, and felt myself being carried away. I tried to swim a bit, but could not even strike my arms out; besides, my clothes were very heavy. I next felt something tugging at my coat,

and found Lucas had seen my predicament and had rushed down the bank of the river and on to a piece of rock that jutted out into the stream, and had there planted himself until the current brought me down, and thus rescued me. After I had recovered a bit I immediately thought of my horse. Lucas left me and then ran to his own horse and was soon galloping to a spot where he could try and save mine. He was successful, for about ten minutes afterwards he led the two horses back dripping wet, my beast being quite exhausted. We made for a sheltered spot among some bushes, where I stripped and hung my clothes in the sun while I went to the river and had a good bath, taking care not to get in the current again. Everything was wet, all my provisions were spoilt except the tinned stuff, and the ammunition was also spoiled, while the gun was seriously damaged.

The next morning the stream was considerably lower, and we forded it easily. The country ahead looked very barren, endless kopjes of dull red stone presenting themselves to view, but about thirty miles north the country changed to a dense bush forest. The scenery was really pleasant, and I enjoyed the ride very much, forgetting all my past troubles. We rested for three hours in the middle of the day, when Lucas led the way to a beautiful spring of water about a hundred yards from the road, altogether a lovely spot. At one end of a little valley was a spring, trickling through the centre. Each side of the hill was clear of bush and the grass was plentiful and sweet for our horses. We ourselves made a poor meal, of tinned meat only, with the clear fresh water for our coffee.

The reader only knows Lucas as the guide, so I

will describe the man as well as I can, as this was the first fair opportunity I had had of conversing with him and forming an opinion of my companion. He was of a very dirty yellow colour, and told me he was a Griqua—thick-set, with small, brown, deep-set eyes. When talking his eyes would be either on the ground or searching the forest in the distance for some unseen object; but perhaps this was a habit. Still I did not care for that furtive and far-away gaze. He did not know his age—a South African native rarely does—but I should guess him to have been about forty years old, his bushy head of wool being sprinkled with grey. He had, he told me, a wife and family near Barkly, and another family near Kuruman, and spent most of his time coming and going from one place to the other. He said he had no occasion to work, as he had his wives at each place and the children were now grown up; his working days were passed, he added, with a grin. He only spoke to me in the Dutch language, and could not speak a word of English.

“What about sleeping to-night, Lucas?” said I. “Is there not a store of any kind anywhere on our road? If so, we had better be getting along.”

“You must not be in a hurry, as our destination is very, very far; you must please leave that to me,” he replied, so I said no more. The road had now become very rough, and showed evidence of rain having recently fallen. We rode on in silence through a bushy valley, only to emerge on the brow of a hill, when the cold night air made us shiver and glad to get the protection of the bush again. Suddenly Lucas turned straight into some brushwood, where I could faintly distinguish a footpath. The overhanging boughs were very troublesome, my hat being

twice brushed off, and the bush made the darkness blacker than ever. We must have travelled for some miles when the cold wind wakened me from a sleepy stupor, and by this I knew the end of the bush was not far. We now struck the main track again, when Lucas spoke for the first time and said we had saved several miles by coming through the bush. "A good many people are afraid to go that way, especially at night, as there are a few tigers; but I see no fear. I did not like to tell you before, as I thought you might not care to go; but you see now that there was nothing to harm us, as a lot of natives try to make out."

There now appeared a bright light on our left front, just as we gained the top of a ridge. Lucas, pointing towards the light, said that was the store. It was a long way off as yet, and it took us fully an hour before we reached the place. This was a well-built store, having a large lamp-stove inside the shop window, which served as a guidance for travellers. South African storekeepers up country would help many a traveller if they adopted this simple plan. The moon had just risen, and as we should start in about four hours' time, we did not sleep there, but the shopkeeper very kindly opened the store to enable me to buy a few provisions, and after a hearty supper we rested in a hut a little off the road until the early dawn. Our horses were hobbled, so that they could eat but not stray far away, as the bush was so thick that if they wandered only a few hundred yards it would be a question if we ever saw them again.

We left Daniel's Kuil on our left, and by ten o'clock reached some native farmers who were friends of Lucas's and were very kind to us. Here I had no

occasion to touch any of my own eatables, as they brought plenty of milk, mealies, and pumpkins. It is wonderful what one will eat when travelling; even the coarsest of foods are devoured eagerly on the road, with a relish which would astonish a newcomer to the country, and this fact goes to show the good effects of an up-country life. I am certain that a journey on horseback for a few weeks in this fine climate would do more to check consumption (not of food) than most people could possibly imagine. I speak, of course, of the early stages of this disease.

A personal friend, with a tendency to phthisis, after three months' stay on the Karoo was a different man. Instead of remaining shut up in a town, as he had long been accustomed, he went out into the Karoo, where he used to rise at dawn and go for long rides on horseback. For a month he took care not to be in the sun in the middle of the day, and not to be out after sunset. Afterwards he was able to do any kind of work on the farm and go anywhere at any time. If he had stayed at home and been nursed up he might probably never have recovered, but have sunk into a hopeless decline. I relate this as a single instance of the wonderful effects of climate in South Africa. These beneficial qualities are, of course, due to the clearness and dryness of the atmosphere when the country consists of a high and level plateau, with no mountains or deep valleys to retain the moisture. Such clear and bracing stretches of country are to be seen in perfection on the Karoo and in certain parts of British Bechuanaland, the region in which I was then travelling.

As we proceeded the thick bush gradually disappeared, until the open flat country lay before us.

We had left the road behind, only a single footpath being visible. The long dry grass in places hung over and obliterated this path, and for miles and miles stretched the rolling grass veldt, undiversified except for a small clump of low bushes dotted here and there over the plain. We slept in the open that night, and in lighting our camp fire had great difficulty in preventing the long grass from catching alight, so dry and inflammable is it that only a few sparks carelessly scattered would very soon set ablaze the whole plain. The next night, after a weary day's ride, we came to the native village of Koning. This place is rather prettily situated among good-sized trees, the sight of which was very pleasant after the long, dreary plains. The entrance to the village was not unlike the approach through a park in Old England; a beautiful stream ran through the centre of the village, meandering further away among the fields.

Lucas told me this was his other home, and made straightway to a good-sized hut where an elderly woman, four or five grown-up sons and daughters, and a small crowd of little ones, whom I afterwards discovered to be his grandchildren, were congregated. One of the sons took my horse and I was invited inside. Being able to speak the Dutch language, I very soon made myself at home, and was cheerfully chatting before the camp fire. In front of the hut was a large roofed-in enclosure, which served as a sort of dining, kitchen, and reception compartment combined; this was made of wattle and daub, and was about seventeen feet high. It was very comfortable, more so than would be imagined by a person who had not had the experience of living for a little while in native huts. These huts

are very warm in winter and cool in summer, and in out-of-the-way places, such as police camps and farms, they are preferable to the more civilised dwellings, especially the usual South African structure of galvanised iron.

It was amusing to hear these people talk about the white people and their ways; and to note their attempts at our modes of living and dress.

I will relate the experience of one of these Griqua maidens, told to me as we sat round the fire. "I had heard," she said, "such a lot about the English ladies and their large and beautiful houses, that I begged to go with my father and brothers who were travelling to Kimberley with a load of wood. It was a tent wagon, so I should be able to make myself comfortable. My brothers grumbled a good deal, saying I should only be in the way; but I argued with them, promising to cook for them on the road, and they at last agreed. So I went. It took us fourteen days to reach Kimberley, and I have never seen such a large place and so many people before. My brother drove the big team of oxen through the streets, and I thought the going and coming of the carts and wagons would never end. I tried to count them, but they were too many. The white people must surely be a big and mighty nation. The white ladies pleased me most in their nice dresses, but I could not understand why their waists are so small.

"I was very pleased at what I saw in the big white man's town, and made up my mind to stop there. I dare not get out of the wagon for fear the carts would run over me, so I waited to see what would take place. My brother sold the wood for £4 10s., and while it was unloaded I got down

and went into the yard, and saw a white lady. She spoke the same language as I am speaking now (Dutch) and said she was wanting a girl to sweep the house and wash the plates. I asked my father, and he agreed that I should engage myself for a month on trial. My wages were 10s. a month, and, my father was to return in a month's time to see if I was pleased. My father returned as he promised to do, and my heart was sore for the home again. I liked my mistress, who was kind to me, but not the master; he used me badly. The street was always full of people, and plenty of bad people too, so I did not like the white people's town, but preferred this quiet place again and to go into the fields and work."

I was presently shown a place inside the large hut where I was to sleep, an ox hide serving as a mattress. Presently the whole family came in, and, rolling themselves in their blankets, lay down, spreading all over the floor. There were no partitions: all slept in the one room, the girls one side and the boys the other; little and big, each sex had its own allotted side.

We stayed here three days, and unfortunately my gun being much damaged owing to its immersion, I could not shoot with it. I was not to be disappointed, however, and on inquiring for another, was somewhat surprised when Lucas brought out a sporting Martini and handed it to me with ten rounds of ball cartridge. I asked him where he got the rifle, and he said he was sorry but could not give me that information. I did not press him, and he seemed so offended that I felt rather sorry I had spoken. A fine strapping young lad came forward and said he knew where good game was to be found, so after

a hasty breakfast we set off on foot, the lad leading. After an hour's walk we began to move cautiously ; a rustle in the grass and a bok jumped up, only his head being visible, and, not sure of my shot, I reserved my fire for the next chance. I had not very long to wait, when up jumped another. This one I made sure of, and shot him clean through the spine. I did not go any further, having done enough, as the sun was getting rather warm, and we returned to the village. The lad carried the bok, it being a small beast, though in good condition.

As we entered the village, we were soon surrounded by a hungry-looking crowd, who quickly made way as we advanced, bringing up the rear with much yelling and clapping of hands. I was glad when I spied the hut in the distance, but no sooner were we well in sight than out came another crowd to meet us. Lucas stood in the passage, and I asked him to tell his people to shift, but he said, "It's no use, they will only yell the more ; they will soon disperse." I then went towards them, and they shrank back as though I were some dangerous animal. I asked Lucas the reason, as surely they had seen a white face before. He replied, "It is not that they are frightened of the white man ; it is *that* they fear." He pointed to a snake-skin which I had fastened round my water-bottle. "They dread that sort of snake, and certainly will not come near you unless you take it off." The skin in question was that of a small cobra I had killed two days previously, which I had dried in the sun and put on my water-bottle as a sort of curiosity.

There was a wedding to take place that evening, to which I was invited, and I gladly accepted the invitation, as I had heard a good deal about Griqua

weddings. It was to be held at a farm about a mile from the village, but Lucas did not care to go, so the elder son acted as my cicerone. We set off on foot, the remainder of the family following us, their remarks about the happy couple being not altogether flattering. The girls were very jealous, as the bridegroom was a rich young farmer, and they could not understand why he should choose such an ugly girl as the daughter of old Hendrik. It will thus be seen that small-talk, gossip, and social scandal are not the monopoly of the white races of mankind. But there is little real malice among these merry people ; in fact, they are always laughing, and seem to have no troubles. The South African native of whatever tribe, in his semi-civilised state, is perhaps the happiest creature in the world.

As we approached the huge fire we could see there was quite a large crowd of natives, and more were arriving every minute. As a visitor, and the only white man in the whole crowd, I received particular attention, and was led to a second big fire, where stood, round about the blaze, about twenty young girls. On our approach they separated, and on my coming close to the fire they seemed very shy. However, I talked to them, as most of them understood the Dutch language, saying that I had brought some tobacco for the bridegroom and some beads for the bride, if they would point her out to me. They were all dressed (or undressed) alike, their costume consisting of an apron made of strings of beads, together with bead armlets and anklets. It was not exactly nature unadorned, but the "costume" was decidedly *decolletée*. A smart-looking damsel stepped forward, and her eyes flashed like diamonds as she caught sight of the beads I had with me. All shyness left

them as they crowded round begging for a few beads, and I could only satisfy them that I had no more left by turning my pockets inside out. Even then a few were not quite satisfied, but embarrassed me greatly by feeling to see if I had any other pockets. Seeing that further search was useless, they left me. As they did so I saw two of Lucas's daughters come up, who, noticing the other girls in dancing costume, gave their blankets to their brother and joined the others. I then asked for the bridegroom, but it seemed he had not yet turned up, and would not until the moon was just peeping out, as it was considered very unlucky to marry when the heavens are darkened. Only thieves and robbers are married in the dark, they say, for they are too ashamed to marry with the moon shining in their faces. Such was the interesting explanation I was given as to the non-appearance of the bridegroom.

As the moon did not rise before midnight, young Lucas and I retired to a large hut, where over a dozen men were gathered together, telling yarns, as is their custom. A fire was in the centre, the smoke escaping by the narrow door, so needless to say the atmosphere was suffocating. As I entered, they stopped talking, and seemed surprised to see a white man amongst them, though most of them had heard of a white traveller who was bound to the unknown land beyond the blue mountains and who was staying at Lucas's hut for a day or two. They all knew who I was, and uttered words of greeting to which I responded as best I could.

The man who had ridden over to the village to tell of the marriage was spokesman. He addressed me saying he was glad to see I accepted his invitation ; and although the white people were masters of their

country he was pleased to see a white man among them alone and unarmed, which showed the confidence the white people had in the Griqua nation. His companions endorsed this little speech by grunts of approval. I answered to the effect that I came as a friend to visit friends ; that I would treat every one as such, and hoped to be met in the same way. I was now handed some tobacco, and with this I filled my pipe and the conversation continued. Calabashes of kaffir beer were next handed round, and we toasted each other, and the bride and bridegroom, royalty being omitted, in the Boer style, which showed that most of those present had been among the Boers.

A burst of shouting, singing, and yelling presently announced the arrival of the bridegroom. We all went outside and a strange sight met my eyes. Four oxen were being driven in front of the crowd by about ten men. Just behind was a young man dressed in European clothes ; then came three or four others not so well dressed. These were followed by dancing girls and boys, who were singing a weird chant. At the end of the chant, it would be taken up by the rest of the crowd, only to be started again by the dancing party, who were on each side of the bridegroom and his supporters. On reaching the second fire a halt was made and a large circle formed, the oxen being in the centre. Two men stepped out, one from each side of the circle, these, apparently, being the fathers of the bride and bridegroom respectively. There was a formal proclamation of the object of the proceedings, and on a given signal the bride and bridegroom advanced. The latter, speaking in a loud voice so that every one could hear, said, " Ye are all witnesses that I am an honest man, for yonder comes the moon

to shine on my face. And you can see the fat cattle I have brought so that ye may all eat. There are also ten bags of Kaffir corn of which beer has been made. Know ye this, that I, —, have taken —, the daughter of Hendrik, to be my wife." He then drove the four cattle towards the father of the bride; then ten men armed with spears appeared, who quickly speared two cattle to death, the other two being driven away, while the rest of the men were soon busy cutting up the carcasses. The dancing now commenced with vigour, the ceremony having been completed, as I afterwards learnt, directly the first spear pierced the first bullock's body. The native beer flowed, and they all ate like vultures, until they were positively gorged.

I sought my young guide and was glad to leave the place, for the orgie was unpleasant to behold. It was nearly dawn when we reached the village, and the girls were not long after us, for old Lucas was very strict with his children. I had forgotten in the excitement to give the bridegroom any tobacco for a present, so sent it out in the morning by one of Lucas's children, and received in return a large basket full of quinces; these were very welcome to the Lucas family, which was extensive.

We started again that night at the rise of the moon, and kept in the saddle until sunrise, when Lucas pointed out to me our destination, which was on the other side of a large mountain. It was, however, still a long way off, and, it seems, would take another three or four days' easy travelling. We had to leave the track at this point, as it led to Kuruman, and struck in a northerly direction, there being no track or path of any description. The level plain seemed to have ended at Koning, and the country

had now acquired a more rugged appearance and was thick with bush. I strongly objected to travelling by night, but my guide laughed and told me to trust him, as he had been born in the country and knew every hill and valley. He seemed so confident that I did not attempt to interfere further. We now made a fire and slept until the moon rose, when we saddled up and left the road. The grass was up to our saddlebags, and we plodded along in silence until the dawn, and I saw Lucas scanning the horizon eagerly as soon as grey light told us of the approach of day.

I spoke for the first time, and said, "Where's the blue mountain? Have we crossed it in the night?" for I knew it had been ahead of us. Lucas drew rein, and, standing up in his stirrups, looked all round before answering, and when he did so it was in a very mild tone. "I don't know," he said; "I must have missed my way: we ought to be now just at the foot of the hill, where I know of a splendid spring of water by which I intended to rest until midday and then to climb the mountain before dark. We must go to our left for a mile or two and see if we can see anything."

The bush being so thick, we had no landmarks of any description to guide us, and an hour's ride brought no sign of the mountain. Nothing but bush, bush bush.

We picked out one bush a little higher than the rest and camped beneath it, hobbling the horses, and tying them with a piece of riem two yards apart. Lucas climbed the bush as high as he could, but could see nothing. After some rest we rode all the afternoon, pushing steadily on till dusk, but we were no further advanced in the matter of finding our way. We lit a fire and ate our supper in silence, for

I could see Lucas was serious and anxious. Luckily our water-bottles were full, so we tethered the horses and slept until daybreak, being quite tired out. After roaming about the whole of the next day, we became alarmed and began to review our position. The horses were badly in need of water and refused to eat; while our own supplies of food and water were finished and we had nothing to eat during the whole of the next day. Lucas suggested a plan which he said he had often resorted to, which was to pull the belt tight round the waist so that the pangs of hunger would not be so keenly felt. I did this, and felt considerably relieved. Our plight was now very serious indeed, and if no road was found by the next night, or perhaps sooner, at Lucas's suggestion his horse must die in order to save our lives. I had had the miserable experience of seeing our oxen die of thirst in the desert, and never wished to see the like again; yet here was I undergoing the very same perils, all because I had allowed myself to be guided by this bragging Griqua. I felt now that we were in a terrible fix.

The poor nags could carry us no further, and we ourselves were both weak and could not last much longer. But we trudged along, our horses following us with tongues hanging out and their noses close to the ground. At last I could stand it no longer, and flung myself under a bush.

The world seemed lost, and I cared for nothing, though I was in agony. I remember noticing Lucas, who, being a native and a much stronger man than myself, was not by any means in such dire extremity. A tear rolled down his yellow, grizzled face, but he did not speak. Having led both horses to a large bush, out of the rays of the fierce sun, and tied them up,

he returned and laid himself down close by my side. I dozed off, and must have slept for some hours, as the sun was nearly setting when I awoke from a pleasant dream of England. I tried to rise, but fell back, and Lucas helped me up. I looked round, and saw nothing but the horrible bush, bush, bush. I reproached my guide. Yes, he admitted, it was his fault, but he had heard the chuckle of guinea-fowl, pointing towards the right, and there must be water somewhere near; but if none was obtainable by the next morning he would kill his horse. I hardly remember what happened after we left the bush, but I will tell the rest of the story in Lucas's own words. He said that he had hold of my arm and was leading me, and that I was accusing him of treachery. I frequently wanted to lie down, but he would not allow me. The two horses were slowly dragging themselves along, when he suddenly felt a tug at the reins. His horse was sniffing the air, and seemed inspired with new life, for instead of dragging on the reins he was now nearly trampling on Lucas's heels. Lucas at once took the bridles off both horses and let them follow their own road, and no sooner were they free than they went straight ahead, Lucas and I following. We went a good distance in this way, and the grass and bush got much thicker. Suddenly the horses stopped by a large clump of thick grass, and walking straight to the middle, put down their heads and began drinking. It seemed a miracle, for there was good water and a sufficiency. I struggled with Lucas to get to the water, but was too weak, and he fetched me some in his hat, and in my eagerness to drink I spilt the lot, which I think was partly the means of bringing me back to my senses. After I had drunk a little I began to

remember what was going on and our terrible position ; but the previous few hours had been literally a blank in my life.

I heard Lucas thrashing the horses with his sjambok to get them away from the spring, which at last he managed to do, and then he led them away a little distance and tied them to a tree, where he took off their saddles. He then gave me a little more water, and, unrolling my blanket, told me I could now sleep. The seriousness of our situation, however, prevented me doing this, and I saw Lucas gather a large heap of dead wood, light a fire and place on it our patrol tin in order to make some tea. He then took his bridle, and from the rein cut a long thin strip, a little thicker than a boot-lace. I dozed off again, and was wakened by an unearthly yelling and snapping, that seemed to be quite close to where I was lying. The fire was low, and I could just distinguish the faint outlines of the horses in the darkness, but no Lucas was to be seen anywhere. I called, but no response came. I felt somewhat alarmed, but I was quite helpless, and my throat was parched like a limekiln and was dreadfully sore. I heard thud ! thud ! thud ! What could it mean ? I called again, " Lucas," and the very noise of my voice frightened me. I flung myself back again, resolved to yield to fate, whatever it might bring. Presently I heard footsteps coming and Lucas's welcome voice. " Don't be frightened," he cried ; I have been hunting while you've been asleep, and see what I have got. The tea is ready, and I will now roast this meat. I did not even look to see what the brave fellow had got, but presently he said in a kindly voice, " Food is ready."

" Do not torment me more," I said. He held

out a mug of tea, but would only allow me a mouthful at a time, and I drank, or rather sipped, until I was fatigued. He then handed me a piece of meat, which I ate ravenously. Yet another piece, and another cup of tea, after which I slept soundly until sunrise.

I awoke half dazed, but was stronger and better, and indeed felt as though I had had new life put into me. We both ate a hearty breakfast of meat and tea, and I asked Lucas how Providence had supplied him with meat in the very nick of time to save our lives.

"I caught something during the night," said he. "Caught what?" said I.

"Please do not ask," he replied, "but the flesh is good."

I did not press him further, but thought his reticence was somewhat strange. The horses were now struggling to get free; and they were again led to the spring, but only a certain quantity of water was allowed them, otherwise they would have endangered their lives.

After hobbling the horses Lucas came back with a smile on his face, saying that he had found a faint path made by wild animals leading to the spring. If we followed this he thought it might bring us to the mountain, so about midday we started, Lucas leading the way round the bushes to the track. I turned aside to examine the little spring that had been the means of saving our lives, and as I came up to it, horror of horrors! what should I see but the carcase of a *wild dog*! dirty and mangy looking; and from its hind leg I could see there had been cut the meat we had eaten. I just glanced at the horrible sight, and turned hurriedly away, violently ill.

Although perhaps it had saved my life, the mere thought of my meal of wild dog even now makes my stomach turn.

The water was not a running stream, but simply a soak-hole about eighteen inches in diameter and a foot deep, overgrown with a thick clump of long grass. A traveller might pass within a few feet and never have guessed its presence, so carefully had Nature hidden her handiwork. Lucas afterwards told me that on examining the water he saw footmarks. He then cut a piece off his rein so as to make a snare, and, tying it to a thick stake, laid it carefully and awaited the result, with which the reader has already been made acquainted.

I walked away with mixed feelings of disgust and thankfulness, and followed Lucas, who had gone forward. Our horses still showed signs of weakness and we could not go faster than at a walk. Game was very plentiful now, but was unobtainable, for though I still carried my gun and ammunition, the former was useless and only helped to burden the horse. I would not throw away the gun, however; for having brought it so far, I was determined to keep it. Moreover, it would do for display if occasion needed. Night gradually came on again, and we were still following up the track, but we had not seen a landmark all this time. The bush was thick, and as we must have travelled a considerable distance, it was plain that we were still lost, and not a sign to guide us aright. We were to pass another night in the wilds. Luckily no wild animals troubled us; only a few antelope gathering round about the spring. Partridges, pheasants, and guinea-fowl could be heard in the early morning, but there was otherwise not a sign of anything living.

We plodded on and yet on. I told Lucas my motto through life was "Nil desperandum," explaining to him the meaning of the phrase. I felt now that sitting still bemoaning our fate would not help us in the least, although I had certainly lost my senses for some time.

Lucas's keen eye at last spied a thin column of smoke, which he pointed out to me in a very excited manner. I said, "Supposing they are wild savages; we shall be out of the frying pan into the fire," and warned him to be careful and to be well on his guard. We left the track, and in about ten minutes were amongst three or four huts, which were built of the boughs of trees we had not seen before. There was a cry, and out popped about six men of small stature and dark brown colour, whom I at once took to be bushmen as described to me by an old Colonist. Their bows were ready, but I dropped my reins and held up both hands as a token of peace. I then told Lucas to do the same, which he did.

"Now then, Lucas," said I, "use that patent language of yours, the proper Griqua tongue; they may understand you."

One of the little men understood perfectly, and after a few words of explanation we were invited to the huts. In a little while we were enjoying a calabash of milk and mealies, after which I slept till I was aroused by Lucas, who said the bushmen's chief had sent out a hunter who had killed a young bok; this had been cooked and was now ready for us to eat. Needless to say that we ate ravenously, and I thanked our kind friends with all the heartiness I could muster. A spell of sleepiness seemed to have taken possession of me, and as the chief had in the meantime had one of the huts cleaned out and pre-

pared for my use, I troubled not about the horses or anything else, but sought the rest I so sorely needed.

I ought to say that I was treated with the greatest respect by the tribe, which numbered, all told, about thirty persons. We stayed in the bushmen's camp about eight days, and by the end of that time I began to feel myself again. We managed to get one of the little men for a guide, who brought us within three miles of the village of Kuruman, and then bade us goodbye. It took us just six days from the bushmen's camp to Kuruman.

We passed through the village and camped on the south bank of the stream, but I had had enough of gold-seeking, and turned my face towards Kimberley without troubling further to look for the place I had been in search of.

Lucas had also had enough of prospecting to last him for the rest of his days, and vowed that he would never hire himself out again as a guide. He became very angry when I chaffed him about his alleged knowledge of every hill and valley in the country. However, he accompanied me as far as Koning, where he said he would see the winter over before proceeding to his southern home. He intended, he added, to recover a little of the flesh he had lost during our wanderings in the bush.

It took me another five days to reach Kimberley, owing to the wretched state of my unfortunate horse. I met Johnson just as he came out of his house, but was hardly recognised at first; for both my horse and myself had changed considerably for the worse. After a good dinner, we spent the whole of the next day talking of my experiences, but nothing would persuade me to go in further search of the alleged gold-bearing property. I have since found out the exact spot, and

have also seen a prospector who passed through the property and reported on it very favourably. "Float" quartz was picked up and reefs traced which are undoubtedly gold-bearing; but since the experience I have related I have decided for the future not to go in search of gold for myself or any one unless the exact places are shown on plans issued by Government. A vague hunt for gold in a waterless desert is fraught with too much risk to be undertaken a second time after what I had endured.

CHAPTER VII

GUN-RUNNING IN BASUTOLAND

I go to Bloemfontein—New experiences—An illicit proposal—The horse-thief's story—It decides me on an evil course—My preparations—I pose as a produce buyer—A friendly understanding with the police—My bargain with the Basuto chief—I cross the drift with the guns—My detention in the Cave—Passing the Customs—Chief Joseph at home—The feast—The missing rifles—The chief refuses to pay—My diplomatic oration—I return to the police camp—Re-crossing the drift—A narrow escape—Good resolutions.

MY desire to see more of South Africa was by no means satisfied by the previously recorded adventures. I now turned my eyes towards the Orange Free State, and, bidding adieu to my good friends, rode over to Bloemfontein, a two-days' ride through a treeless and dry country which gave me by no means a good impression. Still, on seeing such an English-looking town as Bloemfontein, I decided to give the place a trial. I therefore banked my little stock of money, and, thanks to my knowledge of the Dutch language, was engaged by a firm to go out into the back settlements to buy stock for killing purposes, which enabled me to see a good deal of the country. I would at times be away for three weeks at a stretch, and thus had a splendid opportunity of getting to know the country and the people, both Dutch and natives.

I sometimes went as far distant as Basutoland, where I could purchase good oxen at £4 a head. The chiefs at times were troublesome, and after I had made a large purchase would drive two or three head of my stock away into the hills, and then tell me they were lost, well knowing that I should offer a reward for their recovery.

Having been several times annoyed in this way, I did not care to buy cattle in the native territories, and told one of the chiefs one day that it would be my last trip. He suggested that the Basutos wanted guns and ammunition and not money, and that if I brought a rifle I should get two, and sometimes four, head of cattle for it. Thanks to my bargaining instincts, I hearkened to this insidious suggestion; but the first difficulty was how and where to purchase the guns. In the next place, when I had got them how was I to get rid of them, for the country was patrolled on both sides of the Caledon River—on the one side by the Free State police and on the other by the British? A long argument ensued, the matter being discussed from every aspect. Things seemed, from my point of view, to acquire a very rosy tint if I succeeded. A rifle would cost about £4, and I might get four head of cattle for it, which meant a clear profit of £12, on every gun I could sell. On the other hand, the difficulties and dangers that were in the way seemed very great. If caught I should incur a fine of at least £500, or five years in a Boer prison, or the same period in one of H.M.'s prisons. Perhaps on the whole it was best to leave the business alone. But the seed had been sown; and I pondered much over the matter. If only I could manage it, there was plenty of money to be made apart from the excitement and "dare-devilment."

After our conversation, the chief seemed to have changed from a stern, truculent fellow into a very friendly being. I suppose he thought he had opened the road towards a supply of guns, as I had paid close attention to his glowing accounts of the number of cattle he had in his kraal. I knew exactly the rifles he was in need of, and his plans for getting them over the border. Finally he refused to part with me until he had exacted a promise that I would try to get a few guns for him.

My mind now being made up, I started the next day at sunrise, the chief giving me a hearty send off—a very unusual compliment—and three men to help drive my cattle to the border. This time none of the stock were missing. Four days brought me to Bloemfontein, when my employers were at first angry at my long absence, but seeing the class of stock I had bought were in the end greatly satisfied, and in fact gave me a small bonus for the judgment I had displayed in my purchases.

It was during the dinner-hour that a certain old customer would often turn up for a yarn. He had been a notorious horse-thief in his day, and one of a well-organised gang that used to be a terror to the farmers that lived in the districts adjoining the Basutoland border, the Ladybrand and Ficksburg districts especially. A notice issued by the Orange Free State Government was, in fact, still in force setting forth that any of the gang might be shot on sight. This man, it was thought, was then in Namaqualand. Many of the farms in this district I had just visited, and I took, therefore, a keen interest in the old chap's yarns. One of his tales still lingers in my memory, and I do not think it out of place to repeat it here, so that the reader

may have some idea of the character of my reformed horse-thief.

“My father,” he began, “was a German named Swaarts; my mother a Hottentot; never mind about anything else.” Parenthetically, the man had certainly led a mysterious life, of which he desired to leave some portions untold, which of course made me thirst to hear yet more of his dangerous and exciting adventures. I had read plenty of tales of adventure in fiction, but here was the truth, which was a thousandfold more interesting. After a small purchase, he looked round the store, to make sure that no one was loitering about, and then started again.

“It was in Ladybrand, and I was fairly stranded; I had not a ‘ticky’ (threepenny-bit) left, and was precious hungry. My chums had not turned up, so you see I was forced to go wrong. I knew the country well, and also every farmer and his stock. That night, just after dark, I went to Mr. H——’s stable, and with my pocket-knife unscrewed the fastenings of the door, and took out his best horse, a beautiful animal. The saddle was hanging there also, as if ready for me, and I rode straight to Mr. Van Sander’s farm. I knew in what kloof his best span of oxen would be grazing, so drove off the lot and made straight for the border and into Basutoland, which was just two and a half hours distant. By daybreak I was far away in the interior. I now went up to a certain chief’s kraal and told him I wanted to change these young cattle for old ones, as I had finished ploughing. I knew he would gladly make the exchange, as an old ox is only good for the butcher, as he can work no more. In this way I got fourteen large oxen for the sixteen young ones, as

well as two ponies for the horse, saddle and bridle, and returned the same way as I came. As I returned I met on the road old Van Sander, who was following up the spoor of his cattle and was very excited, as he knew that if he did not catch the beasts before they crossed the border it was useless to try to follow them further. Once an ox has crossed and is in the mountains he can never be found again, that is even supposing that the natives will allow one to seek for it in their country, which they will not. I sympathised very much with the old man, of course, and told him I had seen the spoor of cattle this side of the drift and only a little way the other side, where it disappeared in the veldt. The old man threw up his arms, looked down on the ground, and nearly wept. I had begun to move off, and had gone a little way, when he came after me and said, 'It's no use my going any further. I shall never see my cattle again.' Then he told me how for some years he had picked cows all of the same colour, so as to breed a nice span, a Boer's chief pride being his span of oxen. His grief was so apparent, that I was nearly giving the old chap the oxen I was driving and telling him the whole truth; but I checked my good intentions. He said he had intended to take his wife and children to Bloemfontein the very next day, and now was prevented by his loss.

"I knew the old chap had any amount of cattle, but that he had sent them away for winter grazing. At the homestead were about twenty cows and his flock of sheep, about 1,600, so he was not by any means a poor man. Well, he invited me to his house to dinner, an invitation which I accepted, and before I left this same old Van Sander bought all the oxen I was driving for £5 apiece. Now, how's that for cheek?

But then that was in the good old days ; I could not do that nowadays. Besides, after all, what better off for it am I to-day ? Why, not a sixpence ! The old man went to his money-chest somewhere in the floor of the house and paid me in gold, all gold.

“I stayed with him that night and part of the next day, helping him to inspan and load up his wagon for Bloemfontein. I had been riding bare-back, so gave one of my ponies for an old saddle and bridle, and started for Harrismith that evening. Rather late I came to a Boer farmhouse. There was a light in one of the rooms, and I looked in at the window and saw a woman sitting sewing at the table. I knocked, and she seemed to be very frightened, as I could very plainly see through the corner of the window. In response to my request she said, ‘Oh, I am afraid to give you shelter, as you are a stranger, still you can sleep in an outer room, and put up your horse in the stable.’ I assured her I was a traveller, and very tired, and would pay for any accommodation that she could give me. After a lot of parleying she at last opened the door. I at once gave her a sovereign, and told her to bring something eatable. She was at first astonished, and then offered a sort of apology for keeping me waiting so long. I checked her apologies, and asked her to prepare a meal quickly, which she did. I was hungry, and did full justice to the plain food laid before me, which consisted of half a pig’s head and some solid dark bread, and coffee without sugar or milk. She said her husband was riding transport between Bloemfontein and some other town, and was away for three weeks. She was very upset, as that scoundrel Swaarts, who stole Mr. H——’s fine horse from Ladybrand, was reported to be about somewhere in this district, and she

felt very frightened indeed. Well, I assured her that should the scoundrel turn up while I was in the house I would capture him, hand him over to the police, and give her the reward. The poor woman was still very much scared, but after I had assured her that there was nothing to fear she became quite chatty, and it ended up that instead of sleeping in the out-house I was shown into the spare or visitor's bedroom, always the best furnished room in the house. It appeared that the police had been looking for me that very day, and had told the woman I was abroad, and had also given her my description, which must have been decidedly inaccurate.

"I rose at daybreak, but the good woman was up before me, and was ready with a cup of black coffee; she also gave me some rusks for the road. The native brought the pony up to the door; and before mounting I called the woman, put £5 in gold into her hand, and then when I was in the saddle raised my hat and told her that I was Swaarts, the horse-thief. I then rode away.

"On my arrival at Harrismith I was nearly captured, but my slight 'off-colour' saved me. I had just ridden in and put up at the — Hotel, and gone into the stable. The Kaffir boy told me that the police had been there twice looking for Swaarts, the horse-thief, and seemed to think he was somewhere about. No sooner had the boy left the stable than two of the Orange Free State police rode into the yard. I saw there was no means of avoiding them, nor any time to lose, as they were coming straight for the stable. I quickly pulled out my coloured handkerchief, the same as those sold in Kaffir stores by the yard. It was a good length, and made a turban round my head, and I was alongside my pony in a jiffey. The police got

off their horses at the very door and led them in. They saw me at once. The first one said, 'Hullo, Sammy, where did you come from, and where are you going to?' and of course I answered them in broken English, whereas they could only speak Dutch. All they got out of me was, 'Me no speakee Dutchee; me kom Bloemfontein, me go Ladysmit.' They seemed perfectly satisfied, so they off-saddled and adjourned to the bar. I was afraid the native would return; if so the show would be given away, so I put the saddle on the pony as quickly as possible and cleared through the town, going slowly, at first, but a little later galloping as fast as I could. I joined the rest of my chums of the gang a couple of days after. Well, I've stayed longer than I should have done to-day, so goodbye."

I ought to have been shocked by such stories as these; and after all, as he remarked, what good had his knavery done for him? Still, there was something about his adventures which appealed to me; I longed for a free life—to go trading, roving, hunting, anything rather than the daily round of drudgery, drudgery. At last one day my opportunity came. A friend of mine, a roving spirit like myself, suggested a trading trip, my accounts of the Namaqualand trip having given him the trading fever. After some discussion we decided to trade in the Orange Free State and Basutoland. I gave the necessary month's notice, and before that time had elapsed our route was marked out and our oxen and wagon bought.

The outlay was: eight good oxen at £4 each, and a wagon, costing £40, loaded with articles to suit the Boer trade to the extent of £200. A driver and leader were also engaged, so that we could devote

our energies to trading only, leaving our wagon to follow us up on the main road, intending to ride long distances on either side to the different farms. I shall not describe this trip in detail; suffice it to say we did exceedingly well, principally by taking in exchange for our goods, sheep, oxen, hides, skins, and butter, which we salted *en route*. On the sides of the wagon we made a huge crate for fowls, turkeys, &c., so that on our return journey we had plenty of work to do in looking after our miscellaneous stock. Bloemfontein being a large market town, we sold our entire stock by auction the day after our arrival, and realised good prices. Although we had each made a nice little bit of money in a few months, my friend would not go out trading again. He was, he said, not satisfied with making money in this slow way. Johannesburg was booming, gold shares were rising higher and higher; and we parted, he going straight to the Golden City, while I bought more goods and went out trading alone into another district where I had not been before, the scene, in fact, of the adventures of my reformed friend Swaarts. I had a very successful trip, and could now well afford to do a little speculating. I therefore sold the wagon, oxen, &c., and purchased one of the best Basuto ponies I could get hold of, and rode over to see my friend the Basuto chief, whom I will name Joseph, as needless to say I cannot give his real name here. I had decided to try and get some rifles for him, and had already met a certain Orange Free State official at Bloemfontein with whom I had agreed that I should pay £1 for each rifle over and above the usual Government price, viz., £4 10s. How he managed to get them is not for me to say, although I might hazard a guess. The first point of importance was thus

gained. Still there was a great deal to do, and I had to take delivery of the guns at a certain place in the town.

I now went back to Ladybrand, and posed as a produce buyer, purchasing loads of mealies, chaff, &c., on the market, and then forwarding them to Bloemfontein on the off-chance of getting higher prices. Sometimes I would make a little, at other times I would lose. I did this for about a month, so as to let the authorities see I was doing business as a produce buyer. In the meantime I kept my eyes open, as the Basuto border was only an hour's ride away. I was very often on the road and alongside the border, taking a careful survey of the surrounding country. I got very friendly with the police, and a bottle of whiskey in my wallet came in very handy, as I often lost my way, and just managed to reach a police camp at dusk. The camps are rather isolated spots, and a traveller is always welcomed, more especially if a bottle is casually drawn from one of his wallets. Of course a jolly evening would be spent, and then, when the hour was late, I would discover that my business called me away. In such a case I was asked to stay, voted a jolly good fellow, and they declared that they could not let me go alone at night, but that the camp consisted of only two or three men. We thus got very friendly, especially in the case of one man whom I had met long ago on my way across the river. Steadily and cautiously I played my cards, until I had picked my men—two of them—and arranged to pay them £25 a month each to look the other way on certain nights as arranged. Point No. 2 gained.

My next move was on the other side, Basutoland in British territory. I explained matters to Chief

Joseph, who foresaw the difficulties but said he would overcome them, but how he would not say. I could not see how he was going to manage it, as every wagon on entering the country was thoroughly searched for liquor and firearms. Bags of chaff and mealies, and such-like bulky stuff, were very often opened, and even a traveller with a buggy would be told to get out while the lynx-eyed authorities would examine the vehicle. A flask of brandy, such as is usually carried by travellers, has been confiscated, so strict was the law, which was carried out even to the letter.

I had succeeded so far, and though I could easily draw back from the dangerous position I had placed myself in, I felt more determined to go on than ever. Even if I only got ten guns through I should have the pleasure of proving the old saying, "Where there's a will there's a way," though on the other hand if I failed—well, that might mean disgrace for life. Those last three words rang in my ears as I rode into Ladybrand the next morning. I always stayed at the hotel, so that if I was absent for three or four days at a stretch there was no surprise or comment, as my occupation of speculating in produce had very often taken me away for that time. Next day at morning market, as I leisurely strolled down amongst the line of wagons, there were five from Basutoland with grain. The drivers of two of them gave a nod of recognition. The contents were knocked down to me in the usual way, and they started at once for Bloemfontein to be resold. A fellow-buyer casually replied that I had paid full market value for the mealies and that he had received a wire the day previous from Bloemfontein that corn had fallen. I replied that by the time the wagons got there I

was certain that the market would be firmer. He was an old resident, and winked at my remark. I thought I might have been detected or was at any rate suspected already, but in a conversation over a glass of beer later in the day my suspicions were allayed.

Two days after those same mealies were put up for auction on the morning market at Bloemfontein, and the highest bid was 6d. per bag less than I had paid at Ladybrand. They were not sold, the natives in charge being told that unless a certain very high figure was paid the mealies were to be brought back to Basutoland, but not before they had been off-loaded at a certain store in town where no grain was extracted. If put on the scale after reloading the cargo would have weighed about a ton more, as two guns were put inside each bag. Luckily there were another three wagons returning to that part of the territory with grain, which did not fetch the reserve figure, so all returned together. Our two wagons duly arrived and outspanned near the river on the main road. Now came the rub. Would Joseph succeed with his plans concerning which I was in the dark, though I would have given anything to have known what they were? I knew it was impossible to try and get through the drift, and it was equally impossible to cross anywhere else with wagons, as the banks were too steep and the river deep.

I had a great deal of riding backwards and forwards about the country, with long detours so as to avoid coming in contact with farmers; and I could not very well go with the wagons for fear of arousing suspicions. I sent a messenger to Joseph, and nervously awaited his reply, as I had been told by

an old gun-runner that these native chiefs have, at the most critical moment, demanded the guns. No payment was guaranteed, and exposure spelt ruin. The messenger returned, after being away fourteen hours, with about twenty men, and my orders were to hand over the guns when dark to these men, who would take them to a certain cave on the bank of the river, about two miles away. The grain was to return and be sold on the market at Ladybrand under a different driver, so as to disarm suspicion. I followed these men to the cave, and they took me over a very rough road. Each man carried three rifles, but not a halt was made nor a word spoken; all marching in single file until the cave was reached. Even then, although it was bitterly cold, a fire was not allowed to be lit, but there they squatted like so many baboons. At daybreak a sentry was posted among some bushes, in full view of the main road for nearly a mile and a half, and just about midday ten women were seen coming from the Basutoland side. Two natives from the cave made a considerable detour and joined them a long way up the road after they had passed. I began to feel very hungry, and my pony, which was in the cave with me, had had nothing to eat either.

I asked one of the men how long we were going to be there, but his answer was only a shrug of the shoulders. I could not elicit a syllable from one or another of them, try them as I would with all sorts of questions. I pulled out my pipe, but a native jumped up and laid his hand upon it and motioned to me not to light it. I felt as if I were a close prisoner, and it certainly looked so. Think of my position—seventeen men sitting all round me, a

pile of guns on one side, and not a sound from any one; with nothing to eat and not even allowed to smoke a pipe! We waited there all that day, till at length, long after nightfall a noise was heard as if some one was approaching. It was as dark as pitch and there was not a breath of air. As the sound grew nearer the natives, I could hear, had gone out to intercept any one not friendly; and if the approaching persons were unfriendly I pitied them. They returned, after a little absence, with a quantity of what I took to be mealie stalks, for I could plainly hear the Basutos munching away at them. I was very hungry, so I joined the repast and found they were devouring, not mealie stalks but sugar-cane—not substantial food, but it allayed one's hunger. I then slept.

The day was just breaking when I was rudely awakened by one of the natives, who seemed to be the man in charge, and told to saddle up and ride straight to Joseph's place. I flatly refused. What trick was this they were playing on me? I had gone to all the trouble of getting the guns to this spot and had been without food for twenty-four hours; I was as cold and stiff as could be, for I had no blankets and had not been allowed to light a fire, or even a pipe; and I was now told to ride away and leave the guns. I protested, but it was of no use; my pony was saddled and taken up to the top of the stony river-bank, and I was forced to follow. I felt tired, hungry, and out of temper, and could have kicked the fellows; but talk as I liked I could not get a word from them. I rode straight for the road, and on the way I saw the old driver half concealed in the bush. I spoke to him, when he said, "Don't stop, but walk slowly past, and I can still talk to you."

It's all right, Baas; there is nothing wrong. You ride straight to Joseph's place; we shall all see you before to-day's sun goes down."

I had to pass the Customs officer, and the usual questions were asked—where I was going, and where I came from, &c.—and arrived at Joseph's place at midday. He seemed in very good humour and had a splendid dinner ready for me. I did not at first ask many questions, but did justice to the fare, while he sat opposite me but did not speak until I had finished. I then asked him the meaning of this treatment; putting me as it were under arrest and keeping me shut up in a cave? He replied, "You shall see by to-night if I have done rightly or wrongly. I shall not now answer any of your questions." We spent the rest of the day inspecting his beautiful herds of cattle and horses, and I could not help noticing how different from the ordinary native this chief seemed, for he was a man in every sense of the word. He had an imposing way of talking, and was full of self-confidence, one evidently who must be respected and feared by his people. His love of the bottle was his only failing, so far as I could judge from our short acquaintance.

It was nearly sunset when we reached his large well-built hut, which was kept by his wives as clean as any European's house. I looked far down the road, but could see no signs of any one approaching, and remembered that the old driver had promised he would be here about this time. I felt annoyed at this further delay. When I had entered the hut a small table was nicely laid out, there was a steaming joint on a dish, and some wild flowers were stuck into a vase at each end. It all looked sufficiently tempting, and was a complete surprise to

me. I gathered that some native girls hereabouts had been brought up with white people, as this was not at all the usual native custom. Two nicely dressed native women at that moment came in, and these Joseph introduced to me as his wives. They could talk English, but preferred to speak their own language. I was not a master of Basuto, but with a mixture of that language and English we managed to understand one another. It was just dusk when a native announced the arrival of a party, whom I at once presumed to be our people, and this proved to be the case. Next a woman entered with a bundle of sugar-cane on her head, tied up with pieces of grass, and she was followed by others until the hut was full. These bundles were all placed in a heap on the floor. One of them, however, accidentally fell with a heavy thud, the grass broke and the sugar-cane scattered, and then I beheld four rifles tightly bound together with grass. The secret was now out, and, thoroughly elated, I went over and shook hands with the chief, who, I could tell by his grip, was as glad as I was.

All the women now left, and presently a dozen or more elderly men appeared, greeted the chief, and then squatted themselves on the floor. These were the chief's councillors. A lamb that had been roasted whole was brought in and placed on the table, and Joseph having eaten what he required, the remains were handed to his councillors, who soon tore it to pieces with their hands and ate as they sat.

Presently all the bundles were loosened and the rifles counted, when it was found that four of the original number were missing, whereupon Joseph became very angry. We all re-counted, and found that

the number was still short, and the man in charge of the party was sent for. He soon appeared, trembling; the messenger having evidently told him what he was wanted for. He stated he had carried out the chief's instructions to the letter, and could not account for the missing guns. All the party were then summoned in haste, and each one was severely questioned, but nothing transpired to show that there had been any neglect, and there seemed no one to blame among the whole party. Were there thieves about, or what? This Joseph asked of his councillors a dozen times, but no answer came. At last the chief turned to me and said I had not supplied him with the correct number. I was then cross-questioned, and openly told that I had been trying to swindle them out of four guns, and protest as much as I liked I could not shake their suspicions. Finally it was decided that I had to deliver the required number on penalty of forfeiting payment for the guns that had cost me all this trouble to obtain.

It was after midnight when I asked to be taken to a place in which to sleep, as I was dead tired. A nice clean hut was shown to me, containing a single bed made up in European fashion, the bedstead being an ordinary iron one.

I lay down, but not to sleep; how could I? I laid awake, tossed about and wished I had never seen Basutoland! My luck was dead out; for how was I to get another four guns through without the chief's assistance? He had emphatically told me what was his councillors' decision, and that no help whatsoever was I to get from him. Just because I had not delivered the correct number of guns I was to forfeit the lot, or produce the balance within eight days. How was I to do it? I dozed until daybreak,

when I fell into a deep sleep, and was only awakened when the sun was high in the heavens.

I dressed hastily and went straight to the chief's hut, where I found him in council, discussing the affair of the missing rifles. I greeted Joseph with as hearty a "Good morning" as I could muster, but was only answered with a grunt. He then told me through an interpreter that the overnight decision was to be adhered to, and that I had better start away at once. He issued an order to one of his men, who reappeared leading my pony, so I mounted at once and rode away straight for Bloemfontein.

Although I had been swindled somehow out of four rifles, and felt very disheartened, I was determined to see the thing through and get another four guns over by hook or by crook, even if Joseph managed to rake up some other flimsy excuse for keeping back the promised handsome herd of cattle. In a few words it meant that I was to get two hundred odd head of picked cattle or nothing. Accordingly I returned at once to Bloemfontein, where, of course, I had no trouble in procuring the rifles, and the darkness favoured me as I left on my return journey, with two rifles slung on each shoulder. I went a very round-about way, sleeping and hiding in the mountains by day, and reached the Caledon River safely, and hid the rifles there. I then rode on to my friends at the police camp, getting there at sunrise on the fourth day after leaving Bloemfontein. I singled out my men and told them on what night I was going to run my rifles through. I next went to Joseph's kraal, who on seeing me seemed very much surprised, as he evidently did not expect me so soon, if at all. I told him that I had succeeded so far, not forgetting to remind him that the correct number of guns had

already been handed over to his men, and that I wanted his assistance. He told me in an off-hand manner that he had done his share, but that I had tried to swindle him, and he would not give me any assistance whatever. If the guns were not there at his kraal by the next sunrise I need not trouble about them; and as for those he had already got, I knew that I had run them against the law, as the Basuto natives were under the protection of the great White Queen.

I felt thoroughly disgusted at the latter part of the chief's speech; his intended evasion of payment was now easily apparent, and I saw what a rogue I had to deal with, instead of the thoroughly straightforward native I had at first thought him. Such is native trickery, and it is much the same in all parts of South Africa, as experience has since taught me to my cost.

I refrained carefully from exhibiting any signs of temper, which would be fatal at the present moment. It was necessary to "rub" this scoundrel the right way. I turned and looked him straight in the face, and said something like the following in a loud voice: "O great chief, chief of all living things, the white man's friend, who has so many hundreds of oxen, listen to me. If thou gavest to any man two hundred oxen, the following year thy cows would yield thee twice that number, as thou dost everything that is right. The white man's fire-eaters (rifles) hast thou got to-day, a goodly number, and what does the white man get in return? Why, only two hundred oxen. That is nothing to thee, so great art thou." I went on with this nonsense for about fifteen minutes, as this is what is regarded as native diplomacy, for nothing pleases a native more than

flattery. I saw the old man smile, and while in his then humour I repeated my previous request. He was, however, quite decided; if I could bring the four rifles by the morrow's sunrise he would pay me four oxen for each gun, making a total of 240 head; failing in this, I would forfeit the lot. Some Kaffir beer was now brought in; Joseph drank first and then handed the jar to me, it being considered an honour to drink out of the same cup as the chief. We shook hands and parted, as I thought it best to leave while he was in a good humour.

I had tea that evening at the police camp. The night was dark as pitch and favoured me. My friends, who were unacquainted with my plans, pressed me to stay, and seemed surprised that I should leave on such a dark night. It was about nine o'clock when I saddled my good little pony, tightening up the girth an extra hole, which made him look round as if to ask, "What is up to-night?" As I rode away I slipped some cartridges in my revolver, and, having previously marked the place well, I had no difficulty in finding my way. My plan was to ride stealthily through the drift and on to the big road, and then gallop for it if any one approached. I had gone the greater part of the distance, and was already about a mile or so from the river, when my pony shied at something that was moving under the shadow of a bush. "Halt!" sounded a voice, and then a second time, "Halt, or I fire." Without giving me a chance to reply a bullet whizzed past my head. I was so taken by surprise that I hardly knew what to do. I could plainly see that the game was up, and the best thing was to fly for it. The shot frightened my pony, and before I could realise what had happened he had turned and was galloping

madly away. My spurs were pricking him, and he seemed almost to fly. I heard a clatter of hoofs and steel behind me, and knew I was pursued. I had a good start, however, as my pursuer was dismounted when he challenged me, but I had now quite recovered from my shock, and was prepared for anything. I tightened the slings of the guns on my shoulder and held my revolver firmly. My pursuer was gaining, and the noise of his galloping gradually grew nearer and nearer. I felt that he was better mounted than I, and in a short distance would overtake me. My pursuer now had got within about fifty paces, when he cried out again, "Halt, or I shall fire." Almost at the same moment he fired two shots in succession. The first bullet whizzed to my right, and hit the ground about five paces from me, as I judged in the darkness; the other went very high. I was evidently in a tight corner, and had better show my teeth, as the bullets were coming too close to be pleasant, so I half turned in my saddle and fired, straight as I thought, but missed. My second shot found a billet; there was a shriek of pain, and then a heavy thud on the sandy road, mingled with the jingling of stirrups. I sped on, not daring to look behind. I might be a murderer for aught I knew or cared at the time. I had acted in self-defence, I argued to myself. About a mile from where my pursuer fell I drew rein, and pulled off the road a little to enable my pony to get his wind, as he was now panting like a dog. I then had time to look round a little, and found I had not gone past the footpath leading to the cave. The dark clouds had all disappeared, and it was now very much brighter. I walked my pony with the intention of putting the guns in the cave, after which I decided on riding into Ladybrand

and recommencing my business as if nothing had happened. I had just crossed the road, and was on the footpath, when I heard two horsemen coming from the direction of the police camp at a terrific pace. I led my pony under the shadow of a tree, but was too late, as I heard some one shout, "Let us go to the cave; we shall find him there."

The night was very still, and I could hear quite plainly, although my foes were a long way off. I saw no escape on either hand, as on both sides of me the veldt was bare, with the exception of the clump of bushes where I was hiding, and the men would be sure to ride through these. It seemed certain that I was to be caught after all, unless I trusted to my revolver again. I had little time in which to decide what to do. It was useless trying to outrun them, as my pony was already tired, although still ready for another good run. I had one path open, and only one, and that was to make my way down the steep footpath leading past the cave and swim the river. This I decided to do. I mounted and ran for it, but was spotted at once by the two approaching horsemen. My good pony stumbled two or three times, but managed to keep his feet. It was a critical moment, for my pursuers were just behind me! I heard one say, "Don't hurry, Dick; we have got him; he can't get away." The river looked black and cold, and the current was strong. While I was hesitating what to do, whether to give myself up or swim for liberty, a voice sounded quite near to me, "Hands up; you're cornered." I answered not, but put spurs deep into my pony. He reared and then plunged into the river. I was dazed for the moment, but the water, which was cold as ice, restored me. The pony went down and I with him. He came up

like a cork, however, and swam like a duck, but I was too heavy for him loaded as I was. I was quite unable to get the rifles off; they seemed glued to my back, and their weight was appalling. I felt we were being carried down, for we could make no headway at all. The pony was snorting and fighting the rough torrent like the game little beast that he was. To add to the terror of my position I now heard shots, and bullets occasionally splashing up the water round me, but from the direction of the shots I could see we had drifted a long way down stream. I managed at last to slip off the pony's back, and held on to the stirrup-iron, with one arm across the saddle, holding the off side. This had a splendid effect, as the pony came up once more like a cork. At last we touched something firm—rocks; and how thankful I was! I landed, undressed, and wrung my clothes as dry as I could, and put them on again, and commenced to climb the bank so as to restore circulation, for I was bitterly cold. Although tired and exhausted, after the terrible experience of the last few hours, I could not rest, but walked on, leading the pony the whole way to Joseph's place, where I arrived just before daybreak.

I shall not take up any more of the reader's time with the experiences I went through before getting my money for the rifles, over which I had risked both liberty and life. Suffice it to say I got full payment. I was thankful to learn I had committed no murder, as I had imagined, but had only shot the policeman's horse. He turned out to be one of my own paid men, who had had an offer of promotion if he could catch any man running guns through the border. He did not succeed in my case, at any rate, and only met with his deserts for playing a double game, his

ankle having been badly sprained when I brought him down. A sum of money and a good horse patched up the affair so far as he was concerned. I have often met him since, and we always have a laugh over that big life-for-life ride. When everything had been settled, although I was a good bit in pocket, I came to the conclusion that I had had enough of gun-running, which I vowed never to touch again, and that vow I fully intend to keep.

Whoever reads these lines, whether they are established traders, or those about to commence business, or mere adventurers in search of excitement, let them take warning by my experience and not attempt to trade either in firearms or liquor with the black races of South Africa. Let them think first and well of the disgrace that awaits them in the not improbable event of arrest; the ignominy of a convict's garb, the clank of big chains, and the dreaded Cape Town Breakwater, and, worst of all, their characters for ever blasted in the eyes of the world. Love of adventure was too strong for the writer in the instance just narrated. The consequences were scarcely thought of, and it is only now, after some years have passed, that the dreadful business of gun-running and the liquor traffic with natives is brought to his mind in its dire reality. The whole business is, as a matter of fact, wrong and contemptible, and no amount of false colouring or fine writing could ever make it justifiable in the eyes of self-respecting and sane-minded people.

CHAPTER VIII

HUNTING IN THE INTERIOR

A Boer hunting party—I am permitted to join—Description of our leader — Our extensive equipment — Crossing the Crocodile River—A plucky swim—Difficulties with oxen and horse—Safe over at last—In King Khama's country—Proposed Boer treaty—Khama's terms—On the trek—Looking out for the bushmen—The hunt begins—Good sport—Buck and giraffes.

AFTER the experiences described in the previous chapter, I thought it best to try fresh woods and pastures new in search of adventure and excitement. I turned towards the mysterious interior, as yet almost untrodden by the white man, where I could gratify my ardent desire for the wild life of the big-game hunter. I used almost to live with the Boers in the Orange Free State, constantly dealing with them in cattle. Whatever their defects, I am free to confess that they are a very hospitable race, and were friendly to the English as individuals, more especially if one could speak their language. I was staying with a farmer named Hofmeyer, about ten miles east of Bloemfontein, when I heard that one of the sons was going to join a party of hunters bound for the Khalari region. The party was to start the following month from Krugersdorp, and I expressed a wish to go with them. My friend was not the organiser of



PRESIDENT KRUGER.

(At the age of 58.)

the expedition, so could not give me an answer at once, but promised to write and let me know as soon as possible. Three days after I returned to Bloemfontein a messenger was sent in to me with a note saying that Mr. Coetzee, the chief of the party, had no objection to my joining the expedition. My affairs were very soon settled up, and I rejoined my friend at the farm, where we stayed two days, and then proceeded together to Krugersdorp, taking with us our guns, two buckskin suits each, five large mongrel dogs, four horses, and one rifle each, but no ammunition. My companion, Gert Hofmeyer, was a young man about twenty-eight years of age, standing 6 ft. 2 in. in his socks and broad-shouldered, in fact a young giant, with a very pleasant countenance and merry blue eyes. With his lively chatter and innocent jokes he made an ideal companion when travelling through the monotonous country of the Orange Free State.

On our arrival at Krugersdorp there were a number of people to meet us, or rather Hofmeyer, and that they all knew each other intimately was very evident. Coetzee, however, did not come to meet the train, as he had some private business on his farm, and in the excitement of the meeting I was left standing alone on the platform. It was not for long, however, as Gert soon remembered me, and on a few words from him all eyes were turned towards me, and before I knew where I was I had shaken hands with all of them, including the girls. Formal introductions were dispensed with, Gert simply remarking, "This is the Englishman who is going with us." Every one seemed in a good humour, as we stowed ourselves away in a small tented wagonette, drawn by six fine cream-coloured horses. We

were tightly packed, but what did that matter when there were plenty of lively Boer lassies to keep one amused with their continuous chatter? What cared we for the bad roads? Were we not all jolly? though why we scarcely knew. It is indeed one of the chief characteristics of the Boers that they are generally happy. An hour's drive brought us to the farm, a fine old homestead. Here were old Mr. and Mrs. Coetzee and a whole lot of little Coetzees, also the leader of the expedition, who received us warmly but without any ceremony.

Gert Hofmeyer was at home with every one, but as I was a stranger the old gentleman kindly took me in hand and introduced me to his children, from the eldest to the youngest. These numbered fifteen, of whom eight were girls, their ages ranging from thirty-four to six years. Five of the daughters were grown up, and among them were the jolly girls in the wagonette. Although we had already met at the station, old Coetzee thought it was right and proper that a regular introduction should now take place. But what a fine family they were! Every one of them, from the youngest to the eldest, was a strapping specimen of humanity; not a single delicate member among the whole family. They none of them spoke English, neither had they any desire to learn it. As I knew the Dutch language almost as well as themselves, I soon made myself at home, and was as gay and light-hearted as the rest of them.

I shall not weary the reader with all the details of getting together the necessary articles for the expedition, which took us a lot of time, as great care and foresight were imperatively necessary. Before I go further it may not be out of place to say that when my friend Hofmeyer wrote from the Free State to

Coetzee, asking whether I should be allowed to go (Hofmeyer told me this afterwards), the matter was closely considered and debated upon. Was I not, they argued, an Englishman, and when we returned would not this Englishman be in a position to guide other parties to their hunting-grounds, who would shoot on their preserves, and so injure them thereafter? Finally the old gentleman turned the tables in my favour by pointing to Hofmeyer's footnote of recommendation. So it was decided that I should go. At first I thought I noticed a certain stiffness among some of my new acquaintances. When I spoke to them in their own language, however, their feeling of suspicion soon melted away, and I found them frank and open-hearted Boers of the very best class.

Jooste Coetzee, the leader, was a man about the medium height, with small, keen, dark brown, weasel eyes, an unshaven face, and dressed in loose-fitting coarse clothes. He was by no means a person who would strike you agreeably at first appearance. In addressing one he spoke very slowly, scarcely raising his voice above a whisper. As if to make up for his lack of speech, his fiery eyes seemed to pierce you through and through, in the masterful effort to enforce his meaning. Gert Hofmeyer had already told me something of the peculiarities of our young leader, who was totally different from every other member of the family. According to Gert he was of a reserved nature, and spoke very little, especially to those with whom his acquaintance was not of very long standing. He was feared and respected alike, a crack shot with the rifle, a fearless hunter, who had been known to go hunting absolutely alone in the great forests for a week at a time, taking only a calabash of water and some biltong, and never

failing to return with the skin or horns of the object of his search. Even if one made a friend of him he would speak little, but in his heart was written fidelity. Such is a rough description of our leader, of whom I had yet a great deal to learn. Very few would have chosen him without previous knowledge for such a position as that of leader of an expedition into the unknown parts of Africa. But he fully justified his choice, as events will show.

The other members of the expedition were four Boers. I was the only Englishman, but we had in addition four Hottentots and nine other natives, making a grand total of nineteen people. We did not waste much time, as within two days of our arrival we were on the way. We had only two wagons—one of them a full tent wagon—drawn by eighteen oxen each, and each of us had two horses. Our guns consisted of the combination type, one barrel taking the Martini-Henry cartridge and the other a twelvebore shot cartridge. We had also three double-barrelled Express rifles, while the Hottentots and natives were armed with the Martini-Henry. On the day preceding our departure we had a splendid send off, from sunrise until mid-day farmers arriving from far and near to bid us God-speed and a safe return. The carts collected outside the old farmhouse must have numbered at least one hundred and fifty, and the scene resembled a Boer laager. Of course there was a dance, for it is needless to say how fond the Boers are, on any and every opportunity, of this pastime. The parting took place next morning at nearly daybreak, and was somewhat touching, as the expedition was looked upon by many of them—especially the womenfolk—as a rather dangerous undertaking. It seemed

strange to an English mind to dance from seven p.m. until the dawn of day with not a word of sadness until the very last minute—every one in splendid spirits in fact—and then suddenly the other extreme presented itself.

Each of us had kept one horse in the kraal so as to be able to catch up the wagons, which we managed to do an hour or two after sunrise the same day. Our ponies were fresh, and we were all so occupied with our thoughts that there was little conversation for some time; in fact, we gave the ponies their heads and let them canter most of the way. However, we managed to find our voices on sighting the wagons, as we topped the crest of a hill. The drivers had outspanned at a good watering-place, a bend in the river. The natives, or boys, saw us coming from a long distance, and we found ready for us on off-saddling a good substantial breakfast, consisting of boiled biltong, potatoes, maize, and bread, to which we all did justice. After this we looked out our karosses and slept soundly under the wagons until midday. Two days brought us to the town of Rustenburg, which does not need special description, as most of these South African towns are very much the same.

Nothing of importance occurred until we reached the Crocodile River, which we crossed in a novel way. The drift or crossing which we had chosen was the one at the junction of the Notwani River, known as Palla Camp. There was a police station at this place, consisting of four men of the Bechuanaland Border Police. The river was also the boundary between the Transvaal and British territory.

The stream was very much swollen after the heavy rain, and was running very strong. The crossing

was narrow and deep, consequently there was a good deal of danger attached to it, and we decided to wait at least two days. The river, however, had not subsided very much by that time, and as we were anxious to be on the move, one of the party named Pete volunteered to swim the stream on horseback and carry a thin line to the other side. Pete picked out his favourite riding-horse, and riding bare-backed with only his trousers on, he went about three hundred yards up stream. He was not hampered in any way by the line, as it was fastened round his waist so that he could use both hands and feet if necessary. It was a critical time indeed when he reached the centre of the stream where the current was strongest, and we could only look on and urge the brave fellow onwards by our gestures, as the noise of the rushing water was deafening. Suddenly it seemed as if the good horse was going under, as only his head could be seen, but with great presence of mind Pete slipped from the sinking animal and made a desperate grab for the tail, which he luckily managed to grip. The horse came up like a cork, and although he was now with his head facing the direction of the current, the position was still very dangerous. For fully ten minutes the horse struggled, with Pete hanging on to its tail, and slowly, very slowly, bit by bit, the distance was increased between us and them.

The police, who came down every day to visit us from the opposite side, were out for their usual stroll; and from a distance could see that an attempt was being made to cross. They came running down, and so soon as they saw that help was wanted they waded in as far as possible. They were in the very nick of time, as the horse

was just about exhausted when one of the men grasped the bridle and literally pulled both man and beast on shore. Needless to say we were delighted, and gave a cheer when we saw them landed. The horse was so exhausted that it lay down by the river for fully half an hour, but Pete did not seem much the worse for his ducking. Willing hands soon loosened the cord round his body and commenced pulling the thicker rope which we had already fastened on to it, and it was got across and made fast to a tree on each side.

Our next difficulty was to get the remaining horses and oxen over. The oxen came first. We picked out the heaviest beast and tied the rope to his horns so that the man on the opposite side could pull him across, the others following. We had a lot of trouble, as the oxen were afraid of the rushing water and charged us several times. We eventually got them all in, and the current seemed to float them away like so many empty barrels. Great efforts were now made on the part of our friends on the other side at hauling on the tied ox. When the rest of the cattle saw that their mate was not drifting with them they bethought themselves of swimming, and in a short time the cattle were all in a long line as if tied together, and it was really a grand sight. How nobly they struggled, but what a deal depended on the rope! If that broke the whole lot would be lost. It seems strange to people who do not understand the South African ox, for one would think that if the beast in front was in any way weaker than the others and was overcome by exhaustion the others would continue the struggle. But this is not so; when an ox is in an exhausted state, and has lost confidence, he sullenly resigns himself

to the inevitable, and filling his lungs with air, slowly lets it escape him by little puffs until all is exhausted, and then turns over and allows himself to be filled with water like a drowning man. We knew very well that while the tied ox was safe the rest were safe also. The lives of all our cattle, if not of our whole hunting expedition, depended on a single rope! We shouted ourselves hoarse, calling to our friends on the other side not to pull hard but take the stream gradually. They needed no such advice, and finding ourselves powerless to do anything, we contented ourselves by standing and watching while others took the long whips and made a noise far away down the river, trying to urge the struggling animals across. It was magnificent and yet painful to watch the patient beasts struggling in one long line far along the river like a huge serpent. Slowly the line got nearer the opposite side, until we could see that the worst was over by our friends hauling in the rope so easily.

The tied animal struggled towards the drift, and when at length he touched ground, rested but for a moment and then walked ashore. All the oxen followed, and seemed none the worse for their swim, for a few minutes afterwards they were knee-deep in the luxuriant grass on the river-bank. Pete shouted out something to us which we could not hear, and went off with the police, but returned about half an hour later with what seemed to be a huge log of wood carried by about a dozen natives. This was a "dug-out" canoe, which he fastened with a long noose so as to pass it along the rope across the river. Pete took two natives, and fastening a thin line to the boat, let the police hold one end so as to

be able to help the frail craft on its return journey. It was some trouble to get across, as it was like a cork and turned turtle twice, but the natives were prepared and clung to the sides. Being wood, it could not sink, so they eventually reached us, and we greeted our Pete most heartily, as he well deserved. It took us two days to get all our goods over, but we only had one mishap, one load containing salt being overturned and lost entirely. This was caused by overloading the canoe. When loaded about half full, and thus well ballasted, it was very steady, and withstood the rush of water splendidly. Our wagons puzzled us somewhat at first; the only way with them was to get the trek gear across and then fastened to the largest rope trebled; the cattle were then inspanned so that the hind ox just touched the edge of the river. We took good care to fasten the body of the wagon on to the "buck," also the tent, paying especial attention to this, as on a former occasion a friend of Coetzee's, who crossed a similar place with his wagon a few years before, through an oversight lost the tent and the whole of the body, only the four wheels and the lower part of the wagon coming out on the other side.

When all was ready it was very curious to watch the wagon enter the river and slowly disappear beneath the rushing stream. All eyes watched the two teams struggling on the other side, and the minutes almost seemed hours as every foot of ground that divided the water from the hind ox was gained. They struggled past a round stone; then they reached a small flat piece of rock, and so on, until just the edge of the tent at the fore part of the wagon showed itself, and soon the whole emerged

from the river like some live thing. The other wagon was treated in the same way; the horses were last of all swum over like the oxen, and we ourselves crossed in the canoe. By dusk everything was across, and we were all "dog-tired." Nevertheless by the camp fire we talked far into the night, and this was the first real opportunity of understanding the characters of the men who made up the party. Every one seemed unrestrained that night, our uneasiness had worn off, and we were all glad of each other's company. Even our chief and leader, Coetzee, was extremely jovial. He told us that this day's work had preyed on his mind since the beginning of the trek, as he had known cases of whole wagons and oxen being swept away as well as lives lost. You may judge, then, how pleased we all were to think that we had crossed so successfully. The Hottentots and Kaffirs were also happy, as we could plainly hear, their fire being only a few yards away; and they amused themselves with a concertina and dancing, until Coetzee told them it was sleeping time, as we had plenty of work on the morrow and must all be well prepared for it.

I should mention that our friends the police joined our party for an hour that evening, and very nice young fellows they were. It is really wonderful how young Britishers will exist contentedly in such out-of-the-way places, as very few wagons pass that way. The next day the corporal in charge of the station, who also acted as Customs agent, came to the wagons, and we had to make a declaration and sign documents to the effect that we would abide by the laws of the country; and he had also to see that we were not traders and smugglers, taking careful

note of all our guns and ammunition, cattle, and so forth. The country seemed very bare indeed away from the river, as there were no trees, and in fact nothing bigger than thorn bush. The only game we saw were small buck, so we only stayed one day here, just to get our wagons repacked. Two men took their guns and were gone the whole day, but only shot one small duiker-buck and a hare.

Six days' trekking brought us to Palachwe, Khama's town. It was then a large town with only a few white inhabitants, including the missionary, Mr. Willoughby, and Mr. Moffatt, the magistrate. A hut did duty for a court-house, and there was a police camp of five men and three stores. We paid a visit to Khama, who received us very cordially in the large kraal, where we found him administering justice, surrounded by his councillors. When we first entered the enclosure an attendant brought us some stools, but said not a word. According to native custom this meant, "You are welcome visitors, but the King is at present engaged." We waited about half an hour, when the circle of natives all stood up as one man and opened up to the right and left as Khama walked towards us, followed by a few of his principal councillors, all greeting us in the usual way by a shake of the hand. The chief motioned us to be seated, an attendant shortly afterwards bringing the royal chair. We explained to him that we were hunters, and requested permission to travel through his country. To this, at first, according to the usual native style, a bluff refusal was the only answer we could get. Coetzee (through an interpreter) talked for fully half an hour, trying to persuade Khama to let us go, but it was no use, and we all

left the kraal in disgust. We had just got outside the gate when an attendant called us back again, and thinking that the chief had changed his mind, with renewed hope we re-entered the enclosure and approached Khama. He said to Coetzee, "Do the white men feel hungry or thirsty? Stay here while I send for food and drink, as I should like to speak with you for a little while." With this hospitable assurance we all seated ourselves, and by this time about two hundred natives had assembled round us. Coetzee pointed out to Khama that he also would like to speak to him, but his words were of a private nature and he would want the enclosure cleared of natives. A few words from the King, and they all trooped out, leaving only the old men and the councillors. At this stage six girls appeared with large gourds on their heads, which were placed before the King, who, tasting one, invited us to drink.

Khama then said to Coetzee, "What message have you brought me from your chief?" (President Kruger).

"The message I have brought you," replied Coetzee, "is a message of good news, but before I deliver it I must ask you, Why do you stop us going through your country? As you know, we have promised you help if Lobengula again attacks you." Khama, on hearing these words, seemed to get very excited, and said at once, "Yes, yes, you can go, and my best guide shall accompany you. But tell me, white man, what message do you bring?"

"Well," answered Coetzee, "since you have come to reason I will tell you." At the same time he brought out a document about the size of a fools-

cap sheet and began to read. These were the contents—

“Khama, Chief of the Bamangwato, Greeting!

With regard to your request a few weeks ago to Viljoen, I can help you to fight the Matabele nation, and can give you two hundred guns and cartridges. But in return you must come under my Government, and I will take three parts of the cattle and goats captured. You will be allowed as much land as you want for you and your people. Do not delay, as the English are trying to force Lobengula's hand, and then our chance will be lost. Delay is dangerous. You can trust the bearer of this letter. (Sd.) PAUL KRUGER.”

After reading the letter he handed it to the King, who received the message very quietly, and seemed lost in deep thought for about two minutes. An awkward silence followed. One of the old councillors then got up and (as far as I could get to know of the whole discussion) spoke very excitedly against accepting any favours from the Boers at all, and did not approve of the Council asking for help. Another followed, saying that if they did not get help the Matabele were too strong for them and would “eat them up.” One followed the other, some for and some against the letter. Khama the while followed them very closely with his weasel eyes and uttered not a word, until the whole council (about twenty men) had finished. He then rose, addressing Coetzee, and said, “Tell the Great White Chief I give him greeting. Take my words to him, which are the words, the very voice, of my people. The guns and cartridges with which to defend my people I accept, and shall agree to pay for in cattle but not in land, as I do not wish to make war with Lobengula. I can lend wagons, also two hundred men as scouts. I do not wish to take any captured

cattle; you can hold them for yourselves. I do not wish to come under your Government, neither shall I go under the English Government. I want peace; I seek no man's blood or land."

As the chief ended he sat down, and was greeted with grunts of assent from his councillors.

Coetzee produced paper and ink and wrote the message, and then handed it to Khama for signature. The chief made a clumsy stroke with the pen and handed it back, and, the meeting being over, we all shook hands. A servant just then appeared, who beckoned us to a hut, where we were informed food was awaiting us.

We entered a rather large hut, where mats were placed for us to sit upon, and shortly afterwards some girls appeared with what looked like Irish stew served up in a very neat wooden dish. Each of us was furnished with a gourd plate and a wooden spoon. The contents of the large dish consisted of venison, beans, maize, and Kaffir corn, all mixed together. We did good justice to this excellent and nourishing food, with plenty of new milk to wash it down. Such a meal was unexpected, and we enjoyed it all the more. Just as we had finished, Khama, with a few followers, came in, and seemed in a very jolly mood, laughing and chatting, and Coetzee told us all to go to the wagons, as he wished to be alone with the chief to discuss some private affairs. We accordingly all shook hands with Khama and departed, arriving at the wagons about sunset, the "outspan" being half a mile away.

Our leader did not return until late that evening, doing so in the company of two natives, who had bundles with them. We concluded that they were to be our guides, and this we found afterwards to

be correct. Starting the next day, long before day-break, we halted about 9 o'clock at a small vlei. There seemed to be no road at all, and all around us was bush about six feet high. Not a tree was to be seen anywhere, and no hills, but though we were in perfectly flat country we could see no further than a couple of hundred yards ahead. It was a mystery, to me at any rate, how these two natives found the small vlei of water where we outspanned, as there certainly was no road, but merely faint tracks or bridle-paths, which seemed to branch in all directions. The next trek was a long one, and we passed a whole night and day without water. We camped at Khama's old town of Shoshong, where there were still a lot of natives living under a headman, who was a very officious gentleman when we first outspanned at the only watering-place. But we were prepared for his "bluff," and a few words from Coetzee and our two guides soon brought him to his senses, and very soon he was begging Coetzee not to tell Khama what had passed, as he had previously demanded an ox and a gun from us as a present in return for allowing us to go through the country. The affair ended in the old headman sending a special messenger to his kraal to pick out one of his best goats, which was presented to us, as he afterwards expressed himself, "to show the white men we are friends."

The natives here seemed a very miserable lot, and totally different from the natives of Palachwe, although of one and the same tribe. At Shoshong we loaded up six barrels of water, as the next water was distant four days' journey. Our guides informed us of this, and we prepared ourselves accordingly. It is needless to detail the trek, trek, trek of the next four days. The whole country through which we passed

was dreary and desolate in the extreme—not a living thing to be seen, not even a bird, so it may be imagined we all felt somewhat dispirited. We mostly trekked at night, sleeping and resting by day, and how our guides found the road they only could tell. But, sure enough, on the fourth night, after midnight, we could plainly see by the moonlight that the bushes were closer together and the air seemed different. The oxen also appeared to understand that water was near. They were disappointed, however, and so were we all. The guides came running back breathless, telling us not to go any further until daybreak. We were not long in making a small laager, with our cattle well fastened, while Coetzee, Pete, Wilhelm, John Koos, and myself stood to our arms. The natives and Hottentots made the cattle secure, and we divided ourselves into two parties, half of the whole party being perched on the top of each wagon overlooking the cattle. We did not light a fire, although we were longing to do so. Imagine coming all that long way through the desert, and on nearing water being forbidden to drink! It reminded one of the torture of Tantalus. However, we watched until daybreak, and, as the grey light stole up the horizon, eagerly looked towards the gentle slope before us. At its foot could be seen a long line of straggling trees, which told us of the presence of a watercourse, but whether this was dry or not we were to find out in the course of a few hours. Although it was now daybreak we did not let the cattle go, but sent out six of our natives and one of the guides to proceed in a scattered line at a distance of fifty paces apart and report on the river.

The reader by this time will wonder why all this

precaution. That may well be asked, and I shall first reply that if all small expeditions such as ours were as cautious we should more often hear of their return. We frequently hear of a party of hunters going up country, exploring unknown areas, but do we always hear of their safe return?

I have blamed our leader before and since, and urged that he should have confided in us more. His plans, however, were quite unknown to us, and he told us nothing, except at the very moment of action, as in the present case. It seems that he knew from previous experience and from what Khama had told him, that after leaving Shoshong we might come across a party of roving natives or bushmen. On the present occasion it was bushmen Coetzee was afraid of, and the chances were very much against us had we gone straight down to the banks of the river and lit our fires in the usual way. Indeed, had we done this and slept with only a sentry on guard none of us might have returned. We watched anxiously every movement of the men sent out to scout, and, as nothing happened, Pete was ordered to saddle up and ride out with the natives. The cattle in the meantime were unloosed, four of us remaining with the wagons to get breakfast ready and act as guard whilst the remainder took the cattle towards the river or spruit. Suddenly a cry was heard from one of the boys; this was echoed by the rest, and they all rushed to one spot. We were watching intently from the wagons, and could discern that there was a great deal of excitement, but as we heard no shots concluded all was well.

About half an hour afterwards Coetzee and all the men returned, with the exception of four left as cattle guards, and we learnt that only a few hours before

there were human beings of some sort at the river, as in a dry part of the bed were the still smoking remains of a fire, and this it was which had caused the excitement. There was plenty of spoor, which showed that there had been a party of about twelve people.

After a hearty breakfast of mealies only, we all got into our hunting clothes, as Coetzee told us that sport would commence from that point forward. The next few hours saw us hauling out leather breeches, large sheath knives, bandoliers, &c.; and a supply of ammunition for each was taken from the magazine. Rifles were next thoroughly overhauled, also the guns belonging to the Hottentots, and the natives, including the guides, were served out at this place with a gun and ammunition each. A wall of thorn bushes was built round the camp, which took us about an hour to make, and plenty of firewood was brought in for the night. While some were on guard others slept, in fact the whole camp had quite a military aspect; and if any members of the roving fraternity should turn up to dispute our path, we were prepared to make a stand against them. However, nothing of any consequence happened that day or the next night.

It was decided that Coetzee, Pete, Wilhelm, five natives and myself should have a day's hunting on the morrow, starting from camp at dawn. We all rode out on horseback, and when about a mile from camp spread out in the form of a semicircle, I being on the extreme left. We had not gone far before we heard three shots on the far right. At first we were unable to make out what the game was, owing to the mimosa bush, which was dense enough to conceal any animals farther away than two hundred yards

from where we were. We waited and watched, but only for a few minutes, for suddenly a noise like a crack of a whip sounded just a little to my right, and among the bushes I could see about five goodly sized bush-bok. I fired, but missed. Wilhelm, however, who was a better shot, also fired and hit one. Instead of the bok making off with its companions, it actually turned and made straight for a native who had somehow got out of his appointed place in our half-moon formation. Luckily for him, Wilhelm was using a combination gun, and now gave the buck the contents of the cartridge which was loaded with buckshot, killing it on the spot. We afterwards questioned the boy, who admitted that he did not know how to act in the event of wounding such a dangerous animal as the bush-bok. I may mention that this beast, when wounded, in nine cases out of ten, will turn and charge the nearest hunter. Throwing its head back until its sturdy horns lie along its back, thus bringing its nostrils into a position similar to that of a hog's snout, it rushes madly upon its opponent. Just as it reaches its objective it falls on its knees, at the same time bringing its nostrils close to its breast, and with terrific force drives its horns at the hunter. To avoid this desperate charge some presence of mind is needed, and either a well-directed shot brings down the buck, or the sportsman calmly dodges a few paces on one side. The latter plan is usually adopted by the natives, who kill the buck by a blow from their knobkerrie, or stab it with the assegai.

Coetzee had now ridden over to see what had happened, and it appeared he had had a shot at the buck, but missed, owing to his horse being frightened. Wilhelm was therefore congratulated upon being the

first to draw blood. We were all glad enough of the chance to get some fresh meat, as we had been living on biltong and meal up to this time. We were soon in position again, and having made such a good beginning, every one of us was keenly on the alert. Having walked our horses for about five miles, until the sun began to get very hot, Coetzee signalled for us all to close in, and under the scanty shelter of a clump of mimosa bushes we off-saddled and sat down. We had seen on our way plenty of spoor, of wildebeeste, giraffe, and other smaller game.

After we had rested for about half an hour, one of the natives, who had been searching among the bush, ran to us in an excited manner and said he had just seen the spoor of a giraffe only a few minutes old. Upon hearing this our fatigue instantly vanished, and we eagerly went forward to examine the spoor, and sure enough it was as our native had told us. We spread out in a semicircle as before, but as the bush was thick the party was somewhat closer together. After an hour's silent ride three shots were heard in quick succession on the extreme right, which we knew would be from Coetzee's and Pete's rifles. Shortly after three more were heard, and these, as we could tell by the reports, were from the muzzle-loaders of the natives. No one waited for signals, but all galloped forward in the direction of the shots, and as we raced thither we were nearly charged into by about a dozen giraffes. Needless to say all was excitement. The giraffes swerved and cut across to our right, throwing up such clouds of sand in our faces that we could not see anything for nearly a couple of minutes, and by that time the game was far away. So suddenly had it all happened that we looked at one another in surprise, rubbing as we did

so our eyes and ears, which were stung by the force of the sand. We were properly outwitted, but, regaining our lost senses, continued our wild gallop towards our friends. To our joy, we found them bending over the carcasses of two giraffes, one of which a native had just stabbed to the heart with his assegai. They were both males, one being a very large animal. We at once fell to work with our hunting knives upon the long and heavy task of skinning our two prizes, and as it was getting late, and it was not safe to sleep away from the camp, we finished none too soon. The sun was just setting when some meat and a portion of the two hides were fastened on to a pack-horse, for we had nearly nine miles to go before camp was reached. It was lucky for us that our leader was an experienced veldt man, and had taken note of the way we had come, or I am afraid we should have had to make a night of it. This being our first day's hunt, we were all so excited that we had forgotten one of the main duties of all hunters and explorers, viz., the close observation of landmarks. I, for one, had to admit that in this instance I was completely out of my reckoning. However, we got back to camp some time after dark, and the night was spent in a thoroughly festive manner. A bottle of Cape brandy was broached, and we had a *souppje* all round in honour of our first day's hunt, which had ended so successfully.

CHAPTER IX

EXCITING TIMES—HUNTING AND FIGHTING

A Camp picture—Good sport—The salt lake—An attack on the camp — Bachman's Vlei — More good sport — At Ganana's village—An overwhelming visit—Another start —Lions and hippo—A beautiful shot—A deputation and impressive speeches—Anxious times in camp—A rebellion suppressed—Another deputation—Fierce fighting—Severe punishment of the rebels—We reach Masupu.

LET me give a picture of an evening in camp. First of all the reader must put aside his own ideas of repose, seated as he probably is in a comfortable chair, surrounded by "all the comforts of home." Imagine yourself, then, one of a party well away in the interior of Southern Africa. The camp is girt by a strong fence of thorn bush, about six feet high; it has only one entrance, and that a very narrow one, several large thorn branches serving as a gate. These we pull away and enter. Let us pause just for a moment to gaze at the wild, romantic scene before us. A great fire attracts our attention, gathered round which is a small group of men, some lying, others sitting, all talking and laughing. Nearly all are smoking, and the whole party seem in high spirits, for their laughter is frequent and boisterous. The two wagons are drawn up on either side of the fire,

about ten yards apart, and on the far side of the outer wagon is another fairly large fire, where we find a body of natives, also, one would say from their incessant chatter and laughter, a jolly and light-hearted people. We will not listen to their conversation this evening, as we wish to have a further look round the enclosure, which is usually called a "scherm." Alongside the wagon-wheels stand the firearms loaded for immediate use if required. Close by, and also between the wagons, are a number of spears and knobkerries for the natives.

The white hunters, we can plainly see, have made ample preparations for any emergency. These are the "voortrekkers" we hear so much about, the forerunners of civilisation, the men who boldly go far afield with their lives in their hands, and if spared to return will tell of the far-away country they have been to, where they have made a highway for that civilisation which follows them slowly but very surely. They have not been sent by some exploring syndicate, the members of which usually go prepared as for a picnic. For the latter usually the road has been long since pioneered, yet when they return the world rings with their exploits! No, the men in this camp are plain, simple-minded, homely hunters. Such as these first prepare the road for the adventurer, who, when he returns to civilisation, carefully cultivates "the gentle art of self-advertisement." Then follow the missionary and trader, after which John Bull finds himself in possession of another slice of empire.

We have not yet finished our inspection of the camp, and so will leave our friends at the wagons and the friendly fires. We see that the horses are all tied on a long rope, extending from a wagon-

wheel to a bush about fifteen yards away, the beasts being well covered and otherwise protected. The cattle are lying down in front of the wagon, and we notice that they are tied by double thongs and well attached to the wagon-chain by their yokes. Towards the narrow opening we can distinguish the forms of two men, and closer inspection reveals that they are on guard. It is now time to "turn in," and after satisfying themselves that the camp is safe, each man prepares his bed for the night. A few lie on dry grass strewn on the ground within a few feet of the fires, covered only with the kaross of some favourite animal. The hunter looks to his gun, and, laying it alongside him, refills his large pipe and smokes in a peaceful silence, the while his thoughts wander perhaps thousands of miles away to those most dear to him. Here let us leave him, as he slowly dozes off to sleep, mayhap to be rudely awakened by bullets or arrows. Yet, careless of his fate, he sleeps soundly until the morning star appears, when, rising refreshed, he prepares himself for another day's hunting.

We were all up long before daybreak preparing for the hunt. Pete and Wilhelm, with five natives, stayed in camp, while the remainder of the party, numbering thirteen guns, with spare horses, went out. We kept in a body until just before reaching the spot where the giraffes were shot, and then spread out in the usual half-moon formation. There was plenty of game, as the spoor plainly told us, and before we had been in extended order an hour we came upon a heard of wildebeeste. Crack, crack, went the rifles of the centre party! As was reckoned, the game did not stampede straight in front of them, but swerved to our right flank, where Coetzee and Koos were ready

to receive them. They fired only four or five shots, but three splendid animals fell to their guns. The herd swerved again and took to the open country, right away from us. John and myself, who were on the left flank, did not get a shot at all, and our only satisfaction was to learn shortly after what had fallen to the guns of our comrades. The usual signal was given and we all closed in, presently finding our successful gunners with three dead wildebeeste lying before them. Another signal was heard from the centre, where we had heard the first shots, and, proceeding in that direction, we found that the Hottentots had also had good sport, as they had shot two. We did not hunt any more that day, but set to work skinning the animals, cut off the heads as trophies, and packed the best part of the flesh on the horses, returning to camp just after midday. The camp soon looked more like a slaughter-house than anything else, as every one of us was either busy cutting the flesh into thin strips or rubbing it with salt and then hanging it out to dry in the sun. When thus dried the meat is known as the familiar and most useful biltong. Others were cleaning the horns, one pair especially forming a splendid trophy. Some of the hides were cut into strips for thongs, while others were dried to be packed away on the wagon.

We decided not to travel again at night, owing to our uncertainty as to the state of the country, and rather fearing we might be ambushed. We commenced our journey at daybreak, following a so-called track or very indistinct footpath, the boys having to cut down bush and timber here and there to allow the wagons to get along. Nothing of importance happened for about four days, and we did no hunting

during that time, although we were continually in the saddle, and sometimes at long distances from the wagons. We seemed to have left the game behind us at our last camp, as we only saw a stray buck and a small herd of wildebeeste in the far distance. The country was beginning to look better and the bush thicker, while large trees were being constantly met with, and the veldt was much richer. On the fifth day our guides said we should be near some vlei or lake, so we camped at a small spring and decided to remain there until we could find out the next water ahead or the lake. A party was made up, consisting of one of the guides, five natives, Coetzee, Pete, and myself, to go on ahead and find out, if possible, what sort of country lay before us. We took rations for six days, giving orders for the wagons to remain until our return, and before we left the camp was made secure by a thick circular wall of thorn bush.

The first day out we saw not a living thing, and that night we made no attempt at building a scherm, but simply tethered the horses and made a large fire, of course keeping a sentry posted. Only the occasional peculiar bark of jackals or wild dogs broke the stillness of the night. We carried water in calabashes, of which we partook very sparingly, giving the horses only about a pint each. The grass was lovely, however, and the heavy dew which the horses consumed with it saved our water. The second day was spent in pushing forward as before. Towards evening the country seemed to be much greener, some signs of life appeared in the shape of a small bird flying here and there, but no game was to be seen at all. When dusk came on we picked out a huge bush with overhanging branches for our camp, and tried to rest, but were disturbed by a pack of wild dogs, which

hung round the whole night and made the darkness hideous by their wild cries.

Coetzee told us that we should get to some water on the morrow, as he was certain from the presence of the dogs that it was not far away. Still we felt unsettled and anxious, and right glad were we all when we saw the morning star, followed not long afterwards by the glorious sun, by which time we were well on our way again. About midday we came upon what seemed to be a large field of reeds, which we knew was the so-called lake, and rode along the edge of the swamp for about two miles, when we discovered an opening, and could plainly see a beautiful sheet of water. We proceeded cautiously, as the ground was boggy, but managed to find hard ground, and reached the water without any mishap. Pete remained mounted, while the rest of us off-saddled and were about to lead our horses to drink, but were terribly disappointed when a native ahead of us told us that the water was brackish, and sure enough it was so. The thirsty animals just supped, then lifted their heads and looked at us, as if to say, "Why have you come all this way to bring us to water we cannot drink?"

Our only course was to follow the trend of the river, in order to find a hole or soakage of fresh water. This is nearly always possible, as during the rainy season the rivers are mostly roaring torrents of muddy water, and where the bed is sandiest the action of the water scoops out the sand, forming a hole in which, save in exceptionally dry seasons, there is always a little water to be found. We sent a native on foot along the river to explore, and it was not long before he returned and reported having found an excellent hole of water, to which we quickly

made our way, and men and beasts drank their fill. We tethered the horses, and after some reconnoitring managed to pick out for our camp a beautiful spot on a ridge about half a mile from the swamp. Some of us wanted to rest there that night, but it was pointed out by the more experienced that to do so would be very foolhardy, as we had no fixed camp, and were unprepared to withstand the attacks of roving bushmen. Besides, at night wild dogs, hyænas, jackals, and all kinds of animals would come down to the water, and the noise would probably prevent us sleeping, as on the previous night. This argument of our leader seemed very sensible, and it was decided that we would not camp at the swamp. Accordingly, when the horses had rested a little, we retraced our tracks, reaching our camping-place of the previous night, where we slept well. Coetzee took good care to mark the road as he came along, by cutting a bush down here and there, so that we should not get lost.

We were thankful enough when we sighted the wagons, for it seemed as if we had been away a month. The cattle, however, were very close to camp, which in itself, as our leader remarked, did not look as though everything was all right; so, putting spurs to our horses, we cantered up. Koos, who was in charge, related how the previous night they had all been kept awake, fearing an attack from a body of robbers, who had shot one of the oxen with an arrow. One of the boys had also received an arrow through his arm. This was serious news, and though dead tired we made a second wall of thorns round the camp, about twenty yards from the main wall, as previously the bushmen could creep up quite close and shoot an arrow straight at us when only a few

feet away, but by having a second fence such attack would be more difficult. This was a long job, but when completed we felt ourselves quite secure.

A double watch was set that night, and every one of us was so well prepared that we imagined only a volley of buckshot would be necessary if our foes ventured to visit us again. Assured of our perfect safety, we made light of our companions' previous night's fun, as we called it. After a hearty supper, all were as usual talking and laughing over the fire and making themselves comfortable for the night, when there was a whizz and an assegai struck the ground only a few feet from us. For a moment or two we were all silent, as we watched the spear still quivering in the ground, but we were all up in another instant, fires were extinguished by a few buckets of water, and every man was ready at his post in different parts of the encampment. The majority were posted in front among the oxen, while the horses were placed behind the wagons, where they would be sheltered. Our leader showed himself in his true colours at this critical time, for, quickly organising our defence, he visited rapidly every part of the camp. The servants, as well as ourselves, were placed in position, and we could hear him giving each man his instructions. All the ball cartridges were placed in a bucket and stowed under a wagon, and cartridges loaded with loopers (buckshot) were substituted. Coetzee could be seen walking about, and every now and again he would lie down flat with his ear to the ground. Then could be distinguished a rustle, as if the outer wall was being pulled away on the opposite side to where our main body was posted, and Coetzee ran towards us

and in a hoarse whisper told us to follow him on our hands and knees. Our party numbered eight, and we could see the others at their different posts all lying down. As we drew near the fence there was no mistaking that our outer wall of bushes was being quietly pulled away. "Don't kneel or stand up," was passed along in whispers. "And wait until I fire," came from our leader. When we heard the welcome signal and let drive, an uproar as if all the devils in hell were let loose could be heard between the shots. We had fired about ten rounds when Coetzee passed the word to stop. Then all that could be heard were the cries gradually becoming fainter and fainter, until stillness reigned again. We hardly knew what to do or say. Whoever our assailants were, they had lost courage, as they were certainly not returning. As a matter of fact, no arrows were discharged at us, but only about a dozen spears, and these lodged in our inner thorn wall. That our friends did not expect such a warm reception was very evident, and they must have soon got sick of it. We had fired from a frontage of nearly one side of the encampment, and they must have thought we were a large body of men. However, no more fires were lit that night, though so sure was our leader that the natives would not return that only six men were posted as guards. The rest of us returned to the wagons, but not to sleep; for, tired though we were, the excitement was too intense, and we talked until daybreak.

As soon as it was light enough we walked outside to see what the effect of our fusilade had been. Our assailants had pulled down the greater part of the outer fence, and must have just finished

and been ready to do the same with the inner wall when we fired. No bodies were found, but blood was everywhere. The grass was well bespattered, and showed that a goodly number were hit. We never found out whether they were a lot of natives from some village close by, if there was one, or roving bands of bushmen. They evidently had no firearms, but we picked up four spears, an axe, and a small kaross of four jackals' skins sewn together by sinews. But these did not give us any clue, as they are used by all classes of natives in this part of the country. It was evident that none of the party were now in our vicinity, unless in hiding. The general opinion was that only a few had taken part in the attack of the previous evening; and these, having found out the number of men in camp, had returned and brought down the whole of their tribe. So sure had they been of success that they had, in the first place, thrown an assegai into the camp, as is the native custom, to show defiance and certainty of victory. It was estimated that they numbered about forty. We named the place after the ox that had been killed "Blauwberg," and added "fontein" because of the spring near by; and the place is now known as "Blauwbergfontein."

Needless to say a good look-out was kept for the next few days, especially at night. It took us another five days to reach the vlei, which we named Pete Bachman's Vlei; and it is now known as Bachman's Vlei. The usual encampment was made, but I shall not weary the reader with our daily doings at this place. We stayed here, however, for three weeks and had splendid sport, but did not see a sign of human life the whole time. Our

bag for the period mentioned was three giraffe, nine bush-buck, eighteen reed-buck, eight wildebeeste, and eleven water-buck, besides any number of jackals, of which we shot as many as seven in a single night. We had a fine lot of horns and skins, and filled eight bags with biltong. Our oxen had by this time got into splendid condition, and looked more like slaughter cattle than ordinary trek oxen. The horses, however, did not do so well; they seemed to lose their freshness, and became very heavy and lifeless, although we did not work them two days together.

The guides we had obtained from Khama now began to give us trouble, saying they had gone far enough. They were, however, afraid to return alone and tried to persuade our men that further up country was a notorious chief named Khan or Gan whose place was about six days' journey on. When he heard of this, Coetzee promptly seized the two guides, disarmed them, and in front of the whole party tied them up, one to each wagon-wheel, and ordered them ten strokes each with a "nekstrop" (the neck-strap belonging to the yoke). After this punishment, he promised them that if such talk was heard again he would give them fifty strokes each. Needless to say this had the desired effect, and they shortly after came to the wagon and begged for their guns again, and these were handed to them, but with only a very small quantity of powder and shot. We then prepared for a long trek to the chief's town, to reach which our guides said we should have to travel first to a spring about three suns away. Game became very scarce after leaving Bachman's Vlei, until we reached the spring mentioned to us by our guides. This was so small that we had to work a whole day with pick and

shovel before we could get enough water for the use of the camp. Our stay here was for only one day, and a party of us rode out to see if we could get any game, but nothing was seen, with the exception of a few ostriches, and they were too wild to allow even a chance shot at them. We pushed on towards the village, which was reached three days afterwards, and when approaching the place about thirty natives came out to meet us and seemed very friendly. It was situated on the side of a small hill, and the only water to be obtained was from four small pits, so again we had to use our shovels and open up a sufficient supply for our cattle. While thus engaged we saw a whole party of natives coming towards us, but, as they were unarmed, we paid not much attention to them, depending upon our leader to do any talking if it was necessary. An old man was at their head, whom Coetzee, as he went to meet him about a hundred yards from where we were outspanned, took to be the chief. After shaking hands they all came towards the wagon, where a chair was placed for "his majesty." One of the guides acted as interpreter, and it transpired that the chief's name was Ganana. He was an independent ruler, but said he knew Khama, although it was a long time since he had met him. He had often heard of the white people, but had only met them twice before, and, he explained, they were hunters with the same sort of wagon as ours. He hinted very broadly that one of these people had given him a gun and some ammunition, but the latter was finished long ago. The other had given him a long knife, with sheath. Coetzee saw what the old fellow wanted, so promptly unpacked an old musket and a flask of powder, together with three

new hatchets, and handed them to Ganana with the usual native ceremony. The chief shortly afterwards left with all his followers, numbering altogether about two hundred, who, after they had escorted the old man to his hut, came round us again, but kept clear of the wagons. Ganana sent a skin of thick milk and a large calabash of Kaffir beer as a present to the white men, as the bearer explained in a ceremonious way. A handful of salt was given him, and with a grunt of delight he scampered away as if he were a thief running from capture. We rather wondered at this, but our leader explained that a handful of salt was of as much value to these natives as ten shillings to us.

After making ourselves as comfortable as we could, we prepared for a siesta, when a messenger arrived from Ganana saying he wished to see us. We thought it was very kind of the old gentleman, and were for accepting the invitation with thanks, when Coetzee sent a message in return saying we could not accept the chief's kind invitation as we were very tired, but should his honour have anything very important to communicate he would be most happy to meet the chief at the wagons. He handed the messenger a small can of salt as a present to the chief and told him to deliver those exact words to his master.

We all felt surprised, at first, at our leader sending such a curt message in answer to the chief's invitation, but our surprise diminished after a few words of explanation from Coetzee. "Remember," he said, "that just such an invitation as this was delivered to Retief's party in Zululand, with what result all the world knows. The whole party was massacred; not a soul escaped. When

all the white men in the kraal were killed the Zulus marched to the wagons and outraged and slaughtered the helpless women ; and the children were taken by their heels and their brains dashed out on the wagon-wheels. Remember that, my friends, in dealing with native chiefs. So far away from civilisation incidents such as these ought never to be forgotten." He did not mean to say that he expected the same thing would happen in the present case, but forewarned was forearmed : we might or might not be attacked, but if we were once inside Ganana's town, with its many nooks and corners and narrow ways, we should in all probability never get out again. Outside we could withstand the lot, as they had little courage, and would never rush the camp at daylight. We must, however, keep good guard at night, as they might steal some of the cattle if they only got half a chance. The horses, of course, they would never take, as they were frightened of them. Such was Coetzee's opinion.

We were all for getting everything ready at once, but Coetzee advised us not to do so, at all events not until towards evening. Presently a mob of howling maniacs came tearing down the hill, unarmed ; and in another direction a party of about twenty were seen approaching, among whom we could recognise the chief. We watched their antics with wonder, not unmixed with a good deal of uncomfortable suspicion, and were for edging towards our weapons, when Coetzee, who had been watching their movements with hard, set face, suddenly turned to us, and reading our thoughts in our anxious faces, actually smiled, and then, taking a favourite stick, went forward to meet the

chief, who, contrary to general expectation, greeted our leader most cordially. Then both came towards the wagon smiling, the chief jabbering away and gesticulating. As it was about tea-time, a plate of venison and mealies was brought to Ganana, which appeared to please him very much. He made a deal of fuss about the plate, and we thought he was grumbling about the food, when the interpreter told us it was not the food but the plate he wanted. When he was told the plate was given to him as a present, he was so pleased that he took off a beautiful skin he was wearing and gave it to Coetzee. By this time the noise caused by about three hundred howling maniacs was something awful. When we asked the chief to tell his people to be quiet, he only laughed and told us that was the way they gave vent to their feelings when they were glad, and to those who were friendly with their chief they show their goodwill by making a great noise. They were our friends also.

Coetzee told us not to remonstrate, but to grin and bear it for half an hour or so, which we did. The figures these savages cut in dancing, or rather jumping and throwing their arms and legs about, were really wonderful, and although shouting all the while, they did not seem to tire.

It was getting dusk, and all were wishing the old chief would go home, but no, he made us understand that he would stay with us for a while, to which we, of course, could not very well object. The noise had now greatly subsided, and the natives began to light fires all round us. There were about a hundred of these, and we were in the centre, a curious position to be in, thought we. We had refused to go to the chief, and he had

visited us, and with a vengeance too. Ganana and Coetzee were now talking away over their food, and apparently taking no notice of the surroundings. Presently a small body was heard approaching, chanting a weird song and keeping time by clapping their hands, who by their voices we judged to be women. We could see by the light of the many fires that they carried on their heads large gourds of Kaffir beer, which were soon distributed among the whole people. After we had finished our tea, Coetzee told us to take each a little salt in our pockets to give away, and that we could walk about, as there was nothing to fear. It was the native custom that where the chief rests his head there must be laid also the heads of his people. At each fire sat a group of from seven to ten, all of whom were laughing and chatting away in their peculiar language, and as we paused to look at each circle they all put up their right hand and shouted, "Merain," meaning to say "Greeting," and when the chief passed by they stretched forward to kiss the edge of his kaross.

It was nearly midnight when Ganana informed one of his advisers that he was returning to his kraal, as he had greeted the white chief and they were henceforth great friends. A sort of pass-word quickly went round, and the whole body rose *en masse*, and with wild shouts followed the chief to his kraal. How quiet the camp seemed after the violent hubbub of the past few hours! But in spite of the great friendliness shown by Ganana we posted our guards and slept in a state of preparedness. Contrary to expectation, however, nothing happened that night, and in the morning the chief sent as a present a nice fat goat, which was very

welcome after our daily fare of dried venison or biltong. Shortly after breakfast the old chief came toddling down to the wagons with the whole of his tribe at his heels. We felt as if we were a sort of travelling menagerie, as they would stand for hours looking at the horses and ourselves. They were after all a very timid people, for when some of them came a little too near and commenced to examine Koos's rifle, which was standing alongside a wagon-wheel, a feint was made as if to strike a native. With the greatest fear he cleared and with him twenty or thirty others as fast as they could run, nor would they again come within fifty yards of the wagon. We managed to get a guide who knew the whereabouts of the water-pits between this place and a native town named Yorker, situated in a north-easterly direction from Ganana's town, and about a week's journey. We were informed that game was very plentiful in the quarter whither we were proceeding, and were therefore eager to move forward, and the next morning saw us well on our way again. The old chief and about a hundred of his followers escorted us for about a mile, and we parted the best of friends. An old pair of trousers was given to Ganana as a final present, and it was very amusing to watch the old gentleman get into them and strut about.

A splendid "fountain" was reached that afternoon, situated amid lovely scenery, and very thankful we all were to be by ourselves again. We were awakened about midnight by the sounds of fearful screaming and scuffling. We all rushed to where the noise came from, and found the horses in a terrified state, snorting and jumping about. Evidently something serious had happened, but nothing

could be seen anywhere to account for the commotion. A huge fire was lit on the outer side of the horses, and the beasts were gradually pacified, but would occasionally snort and gaze round with alarmed looks. We could not make out whether they had been disturbed by wild animals, or natives, or what, but every man of us was ready for an emergency, and there was no more sleep that night. In the morning, after some search, we discovered the reason why our horses had been so terribly frightened. The spoor of lions was plainly discernible not more than a hundred yards away; there had been some four or five of them which had evidently come down to drink. As the game was reported to be a few miles further on, where we should also get an excellent supply of water, we decided to trek at once and there form a camp with a scherm for protection. We did not, however, reach the place that evening, and spent another anxious night without any wall of thorns for protection. Nothing of a serious nature happened, however, except that a few wild dogs came snapping and snarling around us.

The country was now rather rough for our wagons, and sometimes caused long delays, as in going from one rise to another the dips or valleys, as well as the other side of the hills, had to be carefully surveyed. A clear way had to be picked out and often a few trees felled, and it was a very long trek before we arrived at the appointed place. This was a charming spot, a beautiful stream of water flowing between two hills; and as we could not see a way to get through, we camped on the bank. It took us a long time to form our scherm, owing to the thorn bush of the lower

country not growing in this part, and as bushes had often to be dragged from a considerable distance, it was nearly dark before the camp was finished.

As there were no prowling bands of natives about these parts, our scherm fence was only built to resist the attacks of wild animals, and even that precaution was not actually necessary, as we found out during the next few days. What a delightful country we were in? Lovely veldt, not a mere thicket of thorn bushes and dreary, waterless wastes, such as we had recently passed through, but large trees took the place of scrub, and beautiful hills and valleys lay before us, with plenty of water for the cattle.

We had some grand hunting, and about four weeks were spent at this lovely spot. In the river, too, were otters, of which we shot a large number. Although we frequently heard lions at night, they did not trouble us, neither did we come across any while hunting. That splendid beast the sable antelope was fairly plentiful, also the blue wildebeeste. We shot sixteen of the former and eighteen of the latter, besides nine koodoo, fourteen hartebeest, and one hippopotamus. The latter gave fine sport, and it took three of us to kill him. We also shot quite a number of the smaller species of bok.

It took all our boys the best part of three days to cut the hide of the hippo, which was a very large one, into thin strips for sjamboks. Coetzee and all the party agreed that if their wives were with them they would not leave this part of the country. By this time we had collected a good number of hides, horns, and a quantity of biltong, and we began to think of returning home. We

did not, however, wish to return the same way. Bidding regretful farewell to our happy camp, we trekked out at dawn the following morning, after a thirty-two days' stay and splendid sport, with a plentiful supply of game each day. We could indeed have shot more, but would not slaughter the game wantonly as many so-called sportsmen do. We sighted a small herd of quaggas, the first we had seen, and a splendid run they gave us. Wilhelm managed to get the only chance, at a range of fully seven hundred yards—a beautiful shot, clean through the shoulder, death being instantaneous. We never got another opportunity with these animals—which are known to naturalists as Burchell's zebras—during the whole trip.

The scarcity of game indicated that we were now nearing a village. We did not, however, make straight for it, but took a course in a southerly direction so as to avoid the place, which we safely accomplished. Our reason for this was that a party of hunters were once hunting in the chief's country without his permission, and he took all their cattle away, and after keeping them prisoners for many days at last let them go, giving them each only one ox for riding, and very thankful they were to escape with their lives. It was a long story told over the camp fire one evening by the guide that Ganana had given us. That decided us on adopting the course we now took, and instead of visiting the place, as we had intended, we were now only too anxious to give it a wide berth. The story of the terrible sufferings of these unfortunate hunters is too long to be set forth here. We now only wanted to increase the distance between Yorker and ourselves by as much as

possible, and with our disselboom pointing homewards (but what a distance yet!) we plodded along with merry hearts. I should say we were about five miles south of Yorker, and had encamped, when a party of ten men appeared, holding spears in their hands. They approached to within about fifty paces, when they halted and the whole party lifting their spears high in the air flung them on the ground; then one of them advanced, the remainder sitting down. The man who came forward was a big, powerfully-built fellow with a leopard skin as a covering, and large, beautiful white ostrich feathers decorating his woolly hair. As he approached he showed his hands, as much as to say, "I am unarmed," and shouted some words. The purport of his speech was:—

"O mighty Chief of the white nation, I visit you unarmed, as you see; put aside your spears, I pray you, and give ear to the son of the great Chief Yakin. His message is a message of peace."

He halted about ten yards from the wagon and paused and repeated his words. Coetzee followed by holding his rifle above his head and then placing it at his feet. At this signal the messenger came forward and shook hands with Coetzee only. The rest of us stood looking on and listening intently. Coetzee now bade the man sit down and eat, after which he could deliver his message. The man was very hungry, and devoured readily two large plates of meat, or about four pounds of flesh. Then he delivered his message, which, as nearly as I can remember, was as follows:—

"O Great White Chief, the chief who fears not the lion, who slaughters the lion as we slaughter

a sheep, we have heard of your power with an iron that kills from a long distance. My father, the great Chief Yakin, has sent me to see you and give you his greeting, but before returning to your country he wishes you to come and see him. An ox shall be slaughtered in your honour, and the best hunting-grounds shall be shown to you, and you shall hunt therein for many days. That is my message, O White Chief; I now await your answer. I have ten men who shall be your servants and do your bidding; such are my father's words!"

We all watched our leader, and listened with strained ears for his reply, which came slow and distinct. As his words were interpreted, the messenger's expression changed from stolidity to pleasure. Coetzee's answer was as follows:—

"To the great Chief Yakin, I give greeting. Take this axe as a token of friendship, and I shall accept his kind invitation to visit him at an early date. Owing to my cattle being tired, I shall not turn back to pay my respects to the great chief for at least two days; so, good messenger, return to your father and give him these my words. Keep the fat ox ready, as my men will be very hungry. I have spoken. What is your name, son of Yakin?"

"Solomo," answered the messenger.

"Well, Solomo, I give you greeting; now return without delay to your father."

After Solomo had gone, Coetzee called us round him and told us to be seated. "Now," he said, "you have heard what my message is to Yakin. Well, I shall not lie, but I do not feel inclined to visit the gentleman on this hunting trip. The next time I am along this way I shall keep my promise; so now to work, every man of you. Inspan the

cattle as fast as you can and let us push on: we have two clear days before us, and by that time we should not be far off old Koster's town. If we stay here it means we shall have to fight for it, and that we are not prepared to do. Of course if Yakin attacks us at once, that will be another matter; but if such a thing does happen we will give a good account of ourselves."

John and two Hottentots were told off as rear-guards, so that we might not be taken by surprise if we were followed, and it did not take very long to pack up and set off again. As the cattle had just had a long spell over rough country, it was very hard on them, and they were beginning to look rather thin. During the night we had bad travelling; for there was no moon, and it was as dark as pitch. It was an anxious time, with little or no sleep for any of us. The whole of the next day we pushed on, trek, trek, over broken country, till towards dusk a nice thick clump of trees was noticed, situated on the top of a gentle slope, where Koos, Wilhelm, and Coetzee, who had gone on ahead, had prepared a camp. A few trees were felled, enabling the wagons to enter a small clump, and a few more cut down on either side made the camp like a miniature fort. Our only difficulty was with regard to water, which was at the bottom of the hill, a good half-mile away. It was too late to fetch any that night, and although the cattle were thirsty we could not let them go down to the spring owing to the darkness. No fires were lit, and we had to content ourselves with biltong and water. One of the drivers, sending a boy on ahead of the party, had managed to fill a small barrel, and as we passed just hooked it on the wagon. We felt quite safe here, the trees forming

a regular wall completely round the camp. Space was rather restricted, but the majority did not mind this so long as they could get a chance of defending themselves should occasion arise. We spent another somewhat anxious night, and were very wide awake at dawn, which is generally the time when natives, if they mean mischief, are most likely to make their attack.

Every one was delighted when the ever-glorious sun showed himself, and we scanned every hill to see if we were being followed. As soon as it was clear that there was no immediate danger, we let the cattle and horses out of the camp to graze, and, as everybody was completely tired out, allowed the natives to rest. To have posted any of them as guards after being without sleep for two consecutive nights would have been useless, so we took it in turns to mount guard for two hours each. Koos and myself were the first, and the two hours seemed as if they would never end. So silent was it that the entire camp seemed dead. Even the cattle did not stray far away, as the poor animals were tired out also, but as the sun got warmer they began to move, and eventually reached the river, and by that time our two hours' guard had expired. Our reliefs were Coetzee and Wilhelm, who took their guns and went to turn back the cattle.

I was at first too tired to sleep, and shortly after I dozed off the whole camp was in an uproar and I awoke. I could hear Coetzee's voice calling out for some one to be quiet or he would fire. I jumped up, and, looking round, saw that the remainder of my companions were still sleeping. Needless to say every one was soon roused and rifle in hand. The noise, however, was not that of any hostile natives, but had

arisen among our own men, and our leader was trying to quell them; hence the first words I heard when I awoke. It seemed very evident that he was going to carry out his threat, but, seeing us all rush forward with our rifles (we did not wait for orders, but, copying our chief, each had slipped a cartridge into the breech and made ready), the natives were very soon restored to order. One by one they sank to their knees and prayed us not to shoot. We could not at first make out what was the matter, but in the wrangling that had been going on, before I was quite aroused, I had heard a few words such as, "Let us now act" and "Now is our chance," and when quietude was restored the position revealed was none too pleasant. The natives were disaffected, and we were but five, temporarily holding at bay and on their knees eleven natives and four Hottentots, a total of fifteen.

It appears that the guide we had obtained from Ganana, in conjunction with three of our Hottentots, had planned to murder all of us whites, and so get possession of the wagon and cattle, which they intended to take down to Mafeking, or the nearest place, to sell. If questions were asked they could say the white men had been killed by the bushmen. This, then, was a rough outline of the Hottentots' plot, which had been frustrated by one of their number backing down at the last moment, and hastily calling together the Kaffirs and telling them what was going to happen. The Kaffirs at once took a determined stand against the rest. It seems that Wilhelm and Coetzee, although they had had only two hours' sleep, had taken a long walk together, and were some distance from the camp, and during their absence the cattle had strayed in an opposite

direction. Wilhelm went to turn them alone, while Coetzee returned to the camp; but when a few hundred yards from the outspan he heard a commotion, and rushed forward to see what was the matter. I was awakened at that moment by hearing him call out that he would shoot unless he was obeyed. This was a serious state of affairs, and a council of war was at once called, and Jim, the loyal Hottentot, gave the evidence I have just related, which was corroborated by the native servants, so that there was no doubt as to the guilt of the offending parties. Koos was for shooting the whole lot there and then, as was John, and it seemed as if the sentence might have to be carried out. Coetzee did not, however, share their views, and ordered the men to be fastened with thongs, and put under guard. In the meantime he would discuss what we should do with them. Wilhelm at that moment returned to camp, having brought the cattle and horses close in, but he also had bad news. A party of natives were coming towards us, but were still a long way off, as only a small cloud of dust could be seen in the distance. We were puzzled, as the direction was not that of Yorker's town. A sentry was posted on one of the highest trees to watch the movements of the approaching party, who were still a long way off, so we had plenty of time for a good meal, which we greatly needed. Luckily our cook had not been implicated in the row, but had stuck to his post and done his duty, for which we were very thankful, as a good repast now awaited us.

We were discussing what to do with the prisoners, when the look-out shouted out that the party of natives, numbering about fifty, were approaching, and were at the spring only half a mile away. As they carried

spears, he thought they had been sent from Yorker to bring us back ; so we hastily put aside the subject under discussion and prepared to receive our visitors. The cattle men had just brought all the cattle and horses into the laager, and every man was posted, having alongside him a small heap of ammunition. The prisoners begged to be allowed to help in the defence of the camp, and we agreed to let the Hottentots loose, but not the other natives. We waited anxiously for the enemy to begin, but they seemed to be busy bathing themselves and taking it quite easy. Only two men approached in a leisurely sort of way, carrying their spears and sticks as if out for a stroll. They came on and on, little thinking that they were covered by more than a dozen rifles. When they were about a hundred yards away, Coetzee mounted the wagon and called out to them to know their business. They expressed no surprise, but simply said, " We have been sent by our chief Masupu to welcome the white men, whom we have heard of more than ten suns since. Our town is not far away, and is only the other side of the hill," pointing to a hill that might be thirty or forty miles away.

Coetzee asked why they had brought so many men with them. To this they replied that they were mostly the younger men, who wanted a hunt. As the messengers spoke in a straightforward manner, they were invited to enter the laager, and they manifested some surprise and fear when they saw every man posted in different parts of the camp with a small heap of cartridges alongside him. On being told that we had prepared for a fight, they asked what offence they (the Masupus) had given that we should enter their country to fight, so we had to

explain that it was not with them that we were preparing to fight, but with Yorker's people. The messengers seemed very intelligent men, and talked a good deal about the country through which we had passed and had yet to traverse. Towards evening they asked if they should give orders to their men to sleep at the spring, or would they be allowed to come into the camp? We decided on the latter course, and accordingly, in answer to a young man, who had been sent from the main body to ask the question, orders to that effect were given. The party all came tearing up like a lot of school-children just let out to play; and they were really not much more, all of them being apparently youths between fourteen and twenty years of age. They looked somewhat alarmed on coming among us, as it was the first time they had seen white people. The meeting was a fortunate one, for the very next morning at dawn we were attacked by about seventy natives, whom we found to be a party from Yorker's kraal, sent out to bring us back.

We were all soon ready, but not before two of our oxen had been speared so severely that we were forced to kill them. We did not fire with bullets, our adversaries being at close range, and buckshot was all that was necessary. I think we only fired about six rounds; at any rate no one was killed, though we wounded a good many. The young men of Masupu were glad of a chance to distinguish themselves, and the attacking party, seeing we were heavily reinforced, simply turned and fled, scattering in all directions. It was grand sport watching these youngsters racing after the flying foe. I should not like to make a sworn declaration as to the numbers slain that morning, but out of the body of men that

attacked us I am pretty certain only 75 per cent. ever returned from whence they came. The whole day these young bloods came in by threes and fours, laden with the spoils of their enemies, such as karosses, knives, spears, bows and arrows, tower muskets, and a whole lot of trinkets. We entertained the two elder men who had been sent as messengers, and who seemed highly delighted at the skirmish and its result. They expressed their desire to wait until our oxen had sufficiently rested to enable us to proceed. Their company was very welcome, more especially as, in the event of Yorker wishing to renew the attack, we should have as allies men who were splendid scouts, and all of whom could use their spears well. We now felt strong enough to resist any attack.

The old chief Yorker must have thought better of it, as we camped here for five days and not a sign of a human being did we see all that time beyond the members of our own party. During the last three days we made up a large hunting party, using the natives as beaters. Nevertheless, Coetzee was afraid to move too far from camp, as we did not know when our friends from the north might turn up. But although we hunted close to the camp our bag was quite a respectable one, including six koodoos, two sable antelope, as well as guinea-fowl, pheasants, and partridges by the score.

After all the excitement of the attack was over we decided to punish the leaders of the mutiny. Coetzee arranged that Pete and I should defend while Koos and Wilhelm were to prosecute. The men were fastened up again directly after the admittance into camp of the messengers from Masupu. The morning following the assault by Yorker's men was fixed for

the trial of the malcontents. The proceedings did not last long, as the evidence against the criminals was too black and overpowering, and little attempt at defence could be made. It therefore remained for us to decide in what form punishment was to be administered. Koos and Wilhelm were for shooting them on the spot, while Pete, John, and myself held that the three Hottentots should receive fifty lashes each and be fined the whole of their wages, the other natives to receive fifty lashes with a neck-strap and be turned out of the camp. Coetzee, who acted as judge, sided with us, but added that if any such thing ever happened again no trial would be given, but the mutineers would be shot immediately. The whole camp was then mustered, including our new allies, who by this time were fully aware why the men were tied up and kept prisoners in camp.

The four prisoners were brought into the centre, and Coetzee, through an interpreter, read the sentence of the natives first. When the sentences of the Hottentots were read, they begged for mercy. Never mind their wages, they cried, they would work for another year without pay if Coetzee would spare the neck-strap. It would have been foolish to show mercy, and none was given. They were forthwith tied one at a time to the hind wheel of the wagon and thrashed, and, although two of them fainted twice, the full penalty was paid. They were of no use for work for the next few days, and were allowed to ride on the wagon.

On the sixth morning we went forward, forming with our new allies quite a small army on the march. We reached Masupu village without mishap two days afterwards, travelling through lovely country, the scarcity of water being the only drawback.

When approaching Masupu (the chief and his village were known by the same name) the whole place turned out *en masse* to receive us. The chief seemed very friendly indeed, and, on hearing of the doings of his young men and seeing their spoils of war, he was fairly carried away by his excitement, and ordered two oxen to be slaughtered in their honour, which order was duly executed that afternoon just outside the village. The whole population, numbering about 1,200 people, joined in the festivities, which lasted the whole night, and indeed until dawn was in the sky.



MR. ALFRED BEIT.
(Latest portrait.)

CHAPTER X

ON THE HOME TURN

Conciliating Chief Masupu—Mysterious cattle sickness—A wildebeeste drive—Round the camp fire—A big hunting party—Through the swamps—Malarial fever—An unpleasant predicament—We leave the swamp-land—Death and burial of Koos—The “unlucky mountain”—A depressed hunting party—We return to civilisation—Meeting with the Hofmeyers—A splendid reception—General rejoicings—Government negotiations, an important conference—The party breaks up—Farewell to Coetzee.

MASUPU'S town was built on the side of a hill, and was very picturesque, lack of water being its chief drawback. The only water obtainable was from wells, of which there were three. They had very few farms, the ground being only scratched in odd patches and places. I say scratched, for it was not worked with the plough but with a sort of hoe. They had also large herds of cattle and goats, the veldt being very good indeed. Masupu came to visit us very often and always seemed in a good humour, which was due to the fact that we not only made him the necessary offerings, but, as he seemed a decent old chap, an ancient Tower musket and some ammunition were further presented to him, which greatly strengthened the friendship

between us. This was a policy of expediency on our part, for we wanted to get a number of natives as beaters, and in this respect were successful, as will be presently seen.

When the question was asked of the chief as to whether he would give permission to about a hundred men to join us, he replied that he could not give an immediate answer, as he would have to see his councillors and witch-doctors. He wished to ascertain whether there were any raiding parties about, more especially as his young men had defeated a party of Yorker's men a few days previously, and if he permitted a large number of his young men to be away hunting he would have so many less to fight his enemies with if they should feel inclined to retaliate. The old fellow's arguments were certainly reasonable, and we did not attempt to push our request further that day.

We were very unfortunate with our cattle at this place, as a sudden sickness attacked them, and in one night no less than three were found dead. On the following morning a *post-mortem* examination was held, and it was found that the livers had swollen up to about three times their normal size. We called in the native doctors, or "wise men," as they are called, but they could not diagnose the sickness, as they had never seen it before.

It was very puzzling, and naturally caused us great uneasiness, as we were yet a great way from assistance of any kind, Khama's town being nearest, and that would be about 350 miles, roughly estimated. Our hopes of help sank, therefore, very low, especially as on the following morning another ox was found dead.

The natives were, however, delighted at the idea

of plenty of meat, and very soon they were round the carcasses like so many vultures. Without exaggerating in the least, I can aver that within fifteen minutes not a particle of the dead beasts could be seen anywhere, with the exception of the hides, which we reserved to be made into riems. We dosed the rest of the cattle with a quarter of a pound each of saltpetre, salt, sulphur, and chicory, well dissolved in a pint and a half of water and administered warm. Every animal, including the horses, was given this simple remedy, and we did not afterwards lose another head. This is an old Boer receipt, and worth taking note of should any of my readers ever find themselves in similar plight in this far-off country, as very possibly some of them may, for such a beautiful stretch of territory cannot go long without some of Britain's sons making their way thither.

Owing to this sickness we decided not to work our cattle for at least three days. A hunting party was therefore made up to go on a two-days' expedition, including about eighty natives, with the chief's son as their leader and our guide. Pete, with four men, was left in charge of the camp, and the remainder of us went forth to hunt with the natives. As our horses had just been physicked, we were afraid to go very fast or very far, especially as the sun was hot, and we had therefore to content ourselves with walking. This did not matter much, as the natives knew the country well and would take us straight to some good hunting grounds, and not more than six hours from camp we found ourselves right amongst the game.

A large herd of wildebeeste was first seen, and although a long distance away the natives, in a very short while, turned them, heading them towards us.

Every sportsman can imagine our feelings as we discerned the first symptoms of their approach. At first only the faint sound of breaking brushwood could be noticed, but as the herd came nearer the noise was as if the whole forest were being broken up by some unseen force. Our hearts were beating fast and hopes ran high. As the herd came charging on they could be distinguished through the bushes only about fifty yards ahead. They advanced with a mighty rush, and when within range volleys were fired into the living mass before us. They wavered and then swerved to the left, and were out of view in a few seconds ; the result of the drive, from a sportsman's point of view, being everything that could be desired. Here was a bag large enough to satisfy the desires of the most greedy hunter, and it is to be remembered that we were shooting for our native friends as well as for ourselves.

A few shots were needed to end the struggles of some wounded animals, and then all was still, with the exception of the noise of crashing brushwood, which became fainter and fainter, and finally ceased. On the other side could be heard the wild halloos of the natives, who were now getting closer and closer, until the uproar became positively deafening as they broke through the thicket towards us. They formed a splendid line while beating through the bush, and as they closed in it was really marvellous to see how they united from all sides and almost at the same moment. The noise was deafening, and the perspiration poured from their naked bodies as they made a rush forward to the carcasses. It was only after a great deal of shouting and expostulation that even the chief's son himself could prevail on them and make them understand that we wanted

to skin the animals and dishorn them according to our more civilised ideas. They had already pierced three of the largest with their stabbing assegais and rendered the hides useless. Gradually, however, the young chief got them to sit down, and explained to them that we did not want all the meat, as they at first supposed. As there happened to be a spring about a mile away, we decided to camp where we were. The task of skinning and decapitating the best carcasses and cutting the flesh into strips for biltong took us a long time, and by night we had not finished. I should have said that our total "bag" was eighteen head, of which twelve were bulls, nine of which had splendid horns.

We were a large party that night, and about sixteen different fires were lit in one huge circle, the carcasses being dragged up and placed in the centre, the men sleeping on the outside. No sentry was posted, and our native friends were so excited over such vast quantities of meat that, although fairly tired, they did not sleep till about midnight. I woke just at daybreak the next morning, and a memorable sight met my eyes. Around lay the thick bush; the circle of fires still smouldered, and near them were scattered strange forms in human shape, lying in all sorts of positions. Glancing at the centre, I spied a huge pile of raw meat, and about a dozen wildebeeste lying about, some stabbed, some with their throats cut, some disembowelled, some skinned, while nearly all were dishorned, and the horns piled together in a heap. Gradually the day broke, and slowly, one by one, the natives peered from under their skins, rose, and, scratching a few dying embers together and blowing gently, produced once more a cheerful blaze. Soon the whole party was awake

and sat round the fires until sunrise. Immediately the sun rose all was bustle again, and a furious clatter of tongues was to be heard.

There was no further hunting that day, but the entire party stayed in camp, preparing the meat and skins. The task was finished by midday, after which we triumphantly returned, the natives carrying the meat on poles, each supported by two men. We reached camp about sunset, heartily glad to get back, and well satisfied with our day's work.

As the witch-doctors did not perceive any evil-omens in their boxes of bones—consisting of a few knuckle-bones of the goat, sheep, ape, leopard, lion, and, as is stated, a knuckle-bone from the human hand—our request for a hundred men to go with us was granted, with the one proviso that we should allow them half of the flesh secured in hunting, to which we gladly agreed. As the natives in these parts have no wagons, they use sleighs, and a good deal of luggage can be stowed away on them. Coetzee tried by every means in his power to induce the old chief to let us have a few of his oxen to help us, but though he gave no reasons, he absolutely refused. Our only plan, therefore, was to move very slowly, but although we gathered that we should have water for a considerable distance, the nature of the latter part of the way we could not find out. It was gathered, however, that it was rather a dangerous part of the country, and that there was absolutely no human settlement between this village and Khama's, but that roving bands of natives and bushmen were sometimes met with. Nevertheless, cheerfully and with stout hearts we took leave of our good friend Masupu. The whole village turned out to bid us goodbye, our escort consisting of the

hundred men under the chief's favourite son (Busby as we nicknamed him), with two sleighs, each drawn by a team of splendid oxen, fourteen to the span. The villagers followed for about three miles, and were a jolly party indeed, every one singing, laughing, or talking. By this time nearly all of us had a smattering of the language of the tribe, and we were, although with some difficulty, able to understand one another, which was a very great help. And so our little army went winding through the bush-wood towards the unknown hunting grounds.

For two days we trekked through a lovely country ; our course showing us to be going in a S.S.E. direction. Nothing of much importance happened till on the third day close upon sunset, we came to a fine spring of water, where we decided to form camp, and as Busby informed us this was a fine part for game, we prepared ourselves for work, or rather sport. As there was so large a party of natives, there was no necessity to make any scherm round the camp for the whole time they were with us. During the following day's hunt the party was divided into three portions ; Busby was leader of the right section, and another old man named Juker, one of Masupu's advisers, was appointed leader of the left, while our party formed the centre. It is needless to further describe our plan of hunting, as in nearly every instance it was the same, and resolved itself into a drive. For two days we hunted thus, making some splendid hauls, the bag including koodoos, sable antelope, wildebeeste, giraffe, and three other species of antelope which I had not before seen. The natives were delighted at such luck, and firmly believed that the good spirit was with them.

The party pushed forward as soon as all the

skins, horns, and flesh were disposed of. The bush was decidedly much thicker; and in some places the ground was very swampy, with myriads of mosquitoes, while the frogs made night hideous with their croaking. Game was plentiful, but only of the smaller species, such as the reed-bok and another kind of which I did not know the name. Snakes were constantly met with and killed, but not a single member of the party was bitten by these reptiles, and some good specimens were secured.

One of our party, Wilhelm, became seriously ill of malarial fever while passing through this marsh-land and was at times delirious. Two days afterwards Koos was the same, and the next day one of the Hottentots was taken ill. We were hampered a good deal by so many falling sick at the same time, and the rest of us took large doses of quinine as a preventive. The natives, however, were healthy enough. Busby informed us that it would take another two suns before we were through the swamp, and the outlook was anything but pleasant. So far our hunting trip had been one continual picnic, with a few exciting adventures thrown in to be retold afterwards over the camp fire and in quiet homes. We inquired of Busby if there were any other route, but he answered that the swamp extended to our right and left "ever so many suns away," as he put it. We then tried to hire some of his cattle to help us, but he refused and absolutely declined to listen to us. That night, interrupted by the croaking of tens of thousands of frogs, we discussed our position and decided it was best to return by the way we had come and seek the highlands again. Our leader, however, remained very silent, only speaking in monosyllables, until he saw that the

majority were for returning, when he spoke with a firm, resolute voice, telling us not to be too hasty in coming to a decision, as, if Busby was to be believed, only two days more remained and we should be through, though certainly not with our present teams of oxen.

He went on: "The position, I know full well, is a very serious one, perhaps even more serious than any of you think. Supposing we all get this accursed fever we shall be lost. Yes," he cried, springing to his feet, "lost entirely. All these savages round us now seem civil enough, for we are a compact and well-armed body, but let the white men be prostrated with sickness and then see what love the native has for us." Coetzee was right: few instances of native help and sympathy in such a case stand recorded. It is only from fear that the native is friendly to the white man. The latter's power and knowledge, above all his deadly shooting-iron—these are the influences that keep the black man from murder and plunder.

Coetzee paced up and down in front of the camp fire for about five minutes in silence; then suddenly turning on his heel, he faced us, standing on the opposite side of the fire. Somewhat excitedly, he said, "No, friends, we shall not return; but we shall be out of this fix within forty-eight hours of to-morrow's sunrise. Now trust me, ask no questions, but obey instructions." Having said this, he resumed his seat at the fire, and we all smoked for fully half an hour without speaking a word. The sick had to be attended to, which kept one or other of us trotting about the whole night.

The next morning we did not inspan, for the oxen seemed nearly knocked up. We therefore turned

them out to graze, and presently noticed they could not feed or even bite the grass properly, and on examining their mouths we found that all their teeth were loose. What new misfortune was this? We looked at the natives' cattle, but they seemed healthy enough, and were grazing amid the long rank grass. It was necessary to do something, so we caught each of our own oxen and rubbed a handful of salt into the roofs of their mouths.

Coetzee and Busby disappeared unattended into the forest just after our early breakfast, and our party glanced one at the other and wondered what would be the next move. Having watched the place where they had disappeared hours before, we thought of going in search, as we did not like the idea of our leader being so long away; besides, the natives were beginning to ask one another as to the whereabouts of their chief, and as the old councillors did not know, some of them began to question us. About midday, however, the two men appeared in nearly the opposite direction from the place where they had entered the bush. They were both laughing and talking, Coetzee making himself understood with his smattering of the native language and by gesture. On nearing the camp they both changed their manner, and Busby called his councillor and gave him some orders in a harsh voice. The old man with five young braves picked up their spears and started off into the bush at a quick trot, while our own leader, as he came towards us, although he too spoke in a gruff voice, blended with it a tinge of gentleness. "Quick, men; pack up and let us be gone," he said. John asked which way. "There is only one way," Coetzee answered, pointing southwards.

Some of our loads were placed on the native sleighs, and the Masupu had also agreed to let us have four oxen to be added to our spans. This was grand news, and we all felt as if we were already out of the swamp, and said so.

"The price," continued Coetzee, "you must not yet ask; but when we are out of the wood we may be able to laugh." This was all he said at the time, as the cattle were now being driven towards the wagon to be caught and yoked. Our guns were placed in the wagon, and every one of us worked with all the energy he could muster, and as the native cattle were fresh we had hard work to keep up with them. We had changed our course a little, going more to the eastward. Presently the bushes got less dense, and the ground became very flat and swampy; until, a long distance ahead of us, there lay a big stretch of water right in our course. Coetzee and Busby were in front, ourselves following, through water about a foot deep. As we entered the vlei thousands of ducks, geese, and other water-fowl rose in the air, but we did not stop to shoot, and pushed on. We slept on the opposite side that night, and a most miserable time we had, it being pitch dark and the ground damp. The cries of wild animals and birds, mingled with the croaking of thousands of frogs, were incredibly disturbing, while to these was added the torments of the mosquitoes, which were simply in myriads. These rendered sleep out of the question, for they seemed to penetrate everywhere and everything. Even when we covered up our heads with our rugs they managed to get through somehow. The sick men were almost frantic with the pain and irritation caused by the bites of these insects.

Dawn at last appeared, to our great joy, and in a short time the oxen were yoked up, and we were on our way again. Slowly the heavy wagon rolled on, till in the distance we could distinguish the blue outlines of some low hills, and towards these our course was shaped. The bush began to thicken, and very often it was necessary to chop the trees down in order to allow the wagons to proceed. We only rested at midday for about three hours, and then proceeded on our way again until dark, when we camped. There being no water here, we allowed the cattle no more than half a pail full each from our own supply. We slept soundly until just before daybreak, when we inspanned again and went forward, asking no questions but simply relying on Coetzee's prophecy that forty-eight hours would see us out of this apparently endless swamp. It was nearly noon as we loosened the yoke once more in order to give the cattle much-needed rest. Still the swamp was not so bad, and we hoped we were through the worst of it, though we were still in a dangerous position, chiefly owing to the fact that the cattle were getting weaker and weaker. Onward again until nightfall, and a spring of water was supposed to be within a mile of us. We decided to trek through the darkness, having given nearly all our water to the cattle. Progress was very slow indeed, and one of the sledges was overturned, luckily with no more serious mishap than a pair of koodoo horns being smashed. The spring was not reached till nearly midnight, but it well repaid us the trouble and risk of trekking in the dark, as it was a beautiful piece of water surrounded by lovely grass in which, after drinking, the oxen simply laid down and ate their fill.

Our party did not move the next morning, as the

veldt was excellent and we were now at the edge of the swamp. "One day's rest, and then only one more day's good trek, and danger will be passed," was Coetzee's remark the first thing that morning, a matter for thankfulness, especially for the sick men's sake. Koos and Wilhelm were very little better, but the Hottentot had now quite recovered. A long day's trek brought us to the foot of a very conspicuous hill, where we found a nice fountain of water. A permanent camp was made here, as game was supposed to be in the immediate vicinity, in fact their spoor plainly told us so, and the sick men would now be able to have nourishing food and better attendance. The cattle also sadly needed a long rest, as did the horses; so all round we deemed it wise to call a halt after the trials of the last few days.

On the fourth day our good friend Koos died from the effects of fever. It was a sad day for all of us; for he was a good-hearted man and a splendid hunter. We buried him under a large tree and built a cairn of stones to mark the spot of a tried, trusted and brave friend. He left a young wife and two children to mourn his loss in the far-away Transvaal. The day following one of the natives also died of some mysterious disease, and we buried him a few yards from Koos van Zyl.

The Masupu now began to show signs of unrest, and wanted to be on the move again. We had been at this place about nine days, and all of us felt more like ourselves again and were also longing to be trekking homewards once more. A conference was held on the morning of the tenth day between ourselves and the young chief. Coetzee explained to us that the price he had agreed to pay the chief for bringing us out of the death-trap we were in was a

big one, but that there was no alternative. The bargain made was that Busby should be given one of our wagons if he guided us to a place of safety, and now he had completed his part of the contract, and it remained for us to fulfil ours. It was indeed hard to pay such a price, giving away our home as it were. Those who have travelled in South Africa will know the value of the "veldt home," as it has often been well named. Well, it was hard, but as our leader had made the bargain we had only to grin and bear it as best we could, so we off-loaded all our goods and chattels from the one wagon on to the other. We had also lost two of our cattle at this place, so made up out of our two poor spans a long span for the one remaining wagon.

We named this place "Ongeluks Berg," meaning the "unlucky mountain," and did not waste much more time there, as none of us felt inclined to hunt except for the cooking-pot. We said goodbye to our friend the chief and his men on the morning of the eleventh day of our stay and pointed our faces once more homewards. We mourned for the death of our friend, regretted the loss of our wagon, and had no more desire for hunting; our jokes, too, were all stale, and it seemed as if from our silence every one was stricken dumb, while each one strained his eyes southwards.

Two days brought us to another vlei, and this time the water was not so brackish. We did not go through this, but skirted it about, our course being still in the same direction. Coetzee broke the silence that brooded over one and all of us. "Boys," said our leader, "this won't do! That you are tired of hunting there's no need to ask any of you, so what I'm going to propose is that you put away your hunting clothes and guns, &c.; yes, put them all

away in the wagon, and help to drive the oxen and walk alongside. The natives I shall only allow to carry their spears and sticks; the old Hottentot can carry his gun, but none of the others. For myself, I shall remain armed. Now you can try that for, say, three days, and see what difference it will make."

The proposition led to a lot of discussion, which brightened us up a bit, and we argued until far into the night, which was just what was wanted. Taking our leader's advice, the next morning saw us all in walking clothes, our rough hunter's garb being packed away, and the change seemed to have a good effect on the spirits of the whole party. At night, however, our views altered somewhat, for we were brought face to face with our helpless condition if a party of wandering natives happened to come our way.

"Do not worry yourselves about that," chimed in Coetzee. "I've seen that your rifles are not far away, and although you may not have them constantly in your hands during the day they shall be alongside you at night." For two days we did as our leader suggested, and at the camp fire on the evening of the second day we discovered that we had had enough of walking about with only a stick and watching the game jumping up in front of us as if in defiance. Even the wild fowl on the vlei did not mind us coming within a few yards of them, so we agreed that this would not do, and the evening saw all of us in our old hunting garb. Still we were much refreshed for the change, and began to feel that we were now ourselves again. As the wagon moved forward next day we broke into the bush, and although game was scarce we each managed to bring home something, either an antelope or one of the

feathered tribe, and that evening at the camp fire we again thoroughly enjoyed each other's company. The natives also had lost their discontented feeling, and were laughing and chatting, a thing they had not done now for many evenings.

I shall not weary the reader any further with the experiences of this hunting expedition, although it took another month to bring us to our destination at Krugersdorp in the Transvaal, and we were still in the heart of the hunter's paradise. There is really nothing of very much importance to relate. A five-days' journey through sand, and without water, ensued, involving the loss of another horse and two oxen, and we will now leave the party trekking forward.

We eventually reached Palachwe, and our joy was too great to be put into words as we saw and shook hands with white men again. Our old friend Khama was also very glad to see us, and had a bullock slaughtered in our honour, with a great dance in the evening. We spent nearly the whole night talking about the country we had recently quitted, where the white man even to-day so seldom treads. Khama was very good to us, and when he saw our poor half-starved trek oxen he sent to one of his out-stations for a full span of fat, sleek oxen and lent them to us to enable us to get home sooner. He also placed at our disposal a small wagon, which we very gladly accepted, and with many thanks both to the white residents and Khama we took our leave, not before Coetzee had written to President Kruger a long despatch on our expedition (the contents of which I am not at liberty to divulge), also another from Khama. These were despatched by special messenger to Pretoria.

When we arrived at Palla Camp, to our relief we found the river in its normal state, so escaped a repetition of our former experience. The wagon was got across in safety, although it was necessary to off-load and float all the proceeds of our hunting expedition across in the same old "dug-out," or canoe, which delayed us two days. Another six days' trekking with our young and fresh teams brought us to the village of Rustenberg, and when a day's trek on the other side we were suddenly made aware of the approach of a Cape cart drawn by four horses and a wagonette drawn by eight horses. These shortly pulled up in front of us, and who should be in them but our old friends Mr. and Mrs. Hofmeyer and family and the brothers and wives of my fellow-hunters. The scene was most touching as the long-parted affectionately greeted each other. A sinister report had got about, just two months after we started, that we had all been murdered by the natives, and it was but a few days before that news had been received that the whole party, with one exception, were returning. This news was sent from Pretoria (I presume by Mr. Kruger) to the Hofmeyer family and was confirmed by a telegram from Rustenberg only the day previous. All the womenfolk were crying for joy at thus being reunited to their loved ones—all but one, who was weeping most pitifully, for she was the wife of poor Koos van Zyl. Mrs. Hofmeyer—dear old lady!—went up to her and tried to console the poor broken-hearted soul as best she could. Meanwhile it did not take us very long to prepare ourselves to accompany our friends homewards, leaving our wagons to follow.

We reached an old friend's homestead about sun-

set; and here we found everything prepared for us. A Mr. Viljoen was the owner, and very nice people he and his family were, while quite a party of farmers from the surrounding country had come in to greet us and to hear all about the unknown hunting grounds, and kept us talking till long after midnight. How glad we all were to be once more with our own people, and how welcome was a roof to rest under! Every one of us slept soundly during what remained of the night, and, although somewhat tired, at daybreak we took leave of our friends and were soon on our way homewards again. At midday we got fresh teams of horses, which had been sent to Mr. Hofmeyer two days previously. It was a long way yet, but the day wore past quickly, as we were all in high spirits. Conversation never seemed to slacken, as there were so many things to talk about. Just about sundown the fine old homestead of the Hofmeyers loomed in sight, and an interesting scene met our gaze as we neared the house. Wagons and Cape carts were grouped all round the homestead and quite a large number of people were assembled, almost double the number there were that bright morning we left on our hunting trip. Hurrahs were heard from a long way off, and voices could be distinguished shouting in Dutch, "Yes, it is they; the hunters have returned." It was not long before we pulled up in front of the old familiar homestead. What a scene it was! From the old tottering voor-trekker to the tiniest toddler, all pressed forward to greet the returning hunters. After we had shaken hands with nearly the whole party, who numbered about two hundred, our leader lifted up a youngster about eight years old, and, hoisting him on his

shoulder, stood up on the verandah and thanked all the people who had come to welcome us home. He touched upon the sad death of one of our comrades and gave a rough outline of our doings since we left and the country generally through which we had travelled. He spoke for about half an hour, and would have continued, to the obvious delight of his hearers, had not Mr. Hofmeyer reminded him that some distinguished visitors from Pretoria were waiting to greet the party in the house.

It was twilight as we entered the hall, and we were ushered into a large room, which was brilliantly lighted. Three gentlemen, seated at one of the small tables, rose and greeted us all most cordially. Coetzee was evidently well known by these visitors, but the remainder of the party were introduced by our host. The names of the gentlemen were Messrs. Burghers, Van Wyk, and Steyn, all officials of the Transvaal Government. Mr. Van Wyk made a short speech and, in eloquent terms, welcomed us on our return. Coetzee replied on our behalf, thanking the representatives of the Government for their kindness, and expressing great regret that we had not been acquainted before of the Government's intention of sending its representatives, so that we might have been prepared to meet them. As it was we were scarcely in a fit state to be presented to the honourable members of the Volksraad. To this Mr. Steyn replied that it was such men as now stood before him who made the country what it was, and it was through the knowledge they hoped to gain from us that new territories might be added to the then Transvaal State. They were timed to be in Pretoria by noon on the following day, or they would have given

us longer notice of their coming. It was most important that certain information which we alone possessed should be in the hands of the President in the course of the next day, and as it was now seven o'clock it was arranged that we should assemble at dinner in an hour's time, and that a meeting would be held at ten o'clock that night. These arrangements suited us all very well, as we needed a change of clothing badly, not to mention a bath.

Half an hour later saw us all mingling with the large party which had congregated in the great room. Many were the conjectures as to the outcome of the expedition. Some said the whole of the country from Mafeking or Rooigrond right up to the border of Matabeleland, including Khama's, Sibeles, and Moremi's country, and as far north as the Zambesi would be annexed. Others conjectured that through some agreement or other, which was supposed to exist between the Transvaal and the British Government, Khama's country would be annexed by Great Britain, and the Matabele country would be left to the Transvaal. There were various stories flying about, but of course everything was conjecture. That something was going to happen every one felt quite certain, and in connection with this it was felt that the report of our doings and our experiences of the past few months would perhaps materially change the map of South Africa.

While we were all busy talking the native servants were getting ready the dinner, and it interested me intensely to see the Hofmeyers' large room so full of typical country folk, both young and old, from the rough and unkempt Dutch farmers to the smart, well-groomed young Boers just returned

from Stellenbosch College, the fat Boer vrouws, and the pretty young Dutch girls in new dresses specially made for this occasion, and there was a great display of flowers and laces. All were in the best spirits, and the occasion was truly what Scotch people would call "a gathering of the clans." The native servants were busily employed bringing in heavily laden dishes of all kinds of meats, including a lamb roasted whole, puddings, jellies, salads and fruits. Presently a gong was heard, and every one was silent. A voice spoke: it was that of our host, Mr. Hofmeyer.

"Now, my friends," he observed, "this is a special dinner for a special occasion." He alluded kindly to our band, each of us being mentioned singly, and he hoped that all would do justice to the plain but good wholesome food put before us. Coetzee had the place of honour, and on the left of Mr. Hofmeyer was Mr. Burghers, who represented the Government, although on the present occasion in a private capacity. The remainder of us were all scattered about at different parts of the two long tables that extended from one end of the room to the other. Before commencing silence was again called for, and Mr. Hofmeyer commenced singing grace, in which all of us heartily joined.

The hungry travellers did full justice to the splendid meal before them. Several toasts were drunk and speeches made after dinner; and afterwards the whole of the menkind adjourned to the verandah to smoke. A number of Chinese lanterns were hung about on the shrubs and bushes in front of the house, which made our surroundings look as pretty and as gay as one could wish.

We were all thoroughly enjoying ourselves, when

some one came and whispered to me that it was now ten o'clock and my company was requested. I looked round and found myself face to face with our late leader, Coetzee. I jumped up and followed him inside the house, almost to the end of the passage. He stopped in front of a door and knocked, and it was opened by Mr. Hofmeyer himself, and we walked in. The room was small, its walls were bare, with the exception of a few antelope horns on one side, some rifles on a rack on the other, and a very old map of South Africa. A fire was burning in the grate, the fireplace being of the old-fashioned sort such as is usually seen in antiquated English but seldom in Dutch farmhouses. A round table was in the centre of the room; on this stood plenty of paper (foolscap size), pens, and ink. A form about ten feet long stretched along one of the walls; there were also some half a dozen vacant chairs, which were presently to be occupied by our friends from Pretoria.

The door was then locked, and all of us—that is to say Van Wyk, Burghers, Steyn, Coetzee, our host, Mr. Hofmeyer, and myself—were sworn to secrecy, and the proceedings commenced. Coetzee opened his diary and read much that I have written herein. The negotiations with Khama and the other chiefs were set forth, certain recommendations were made, and the doings of various political leaders from the British side were discussed. With regard to these and other important and intricate questions I am still bound to secrecy, consequently I cannot place the public in possession of Boer ambitions—especially with regard to certain treaties—and the intentions of the Transvaal Republic.

Our meeting did not terminate till two o'clock

next morning, when orders were given for the Cape cart to be ready to proceed to Pretoria immediately. We bade our Pretoria friends farewell half an hour later, and saw them safely tucked away in the cart, but I did not envy them their journey, as the weather was bitterly cold. However, statesmen, like hunters, have their work to do, weather notwithstanding. Mr. Hofmeyer now showed us into a beautifully clean and large bedroom, and it did not take us long to undress and get between the sheets. Yes, it was quite true, we were not dreaming, they were actually beds, a luxury we had not known for months!

It was very late, in fact midday, when we were awakened by Mr. Hofmeyer himself, who came to my bedside and roused me first. Coetzee awoke with a start, not knowing where he was for a moment or two, just as a tray containing coffee and other refreshments was being brought in by a native servant. It did not take us long to dress, and we were surprised to find a large number of people still at the house.

We missed our late fellow-hunters, but on inquiry I found out they had all of them, after dinner the previous night, gone to their respective homes with their relations, but would return the next evening for a dance. That evening, sure enough, saw our friends ready for the favourite Boer pastime, which lasted until daybreak the following day. We had retired not more than about three hours when news was brought in that the wagons were not far away, which was the signal for further excitement, this time among the coloured servants. Nearly a hundred turned up from somewhere to welcome their brethren. They also received a

royal welcome, and Mr. Hofmeyer gave them an ox to kill and eat as a reward for their good service, especially the Hottentots, most of whom were old servants whose fathers had belonged to the Hofmeyer family during the slave period, now a great many years ago.

The two wagons were brought alongside the homestead. The horns, hides, biltong, &c., were all off-loaded and sorted out, each member of the expedition had his *pro rata* share allotted to him, and a nice little sum each share represented. Coetzee and I divided ours between a few friends at Pretoria and our esteemed friends Mr. and Mrs. Hofmeyer, all that I kept in memory of the expedition being the skin of a zebra's head and a pair each of lassaby and sable antelope horns.

That evening was to be the farewell gathering; and as usual it ended in a dance, in which about fifty-four couples took part, and a jolly time was spent. Coetzee and myself left the next morning at eight o'clock, bound for Bloemfontein *via* Krugersdorp, taking cordial leave of our many friends and our most kind and worthy hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Hofmeyer and family. We parted after many handshakes and with the earnest wishes of all that Coetzee would return again very shortly, as work was required of him, and he only could take it in hand in order to bring it to a satisfactory issue. Their last words were that he was not to forget to bring the young Englishman, or Afrikander as they preferred to call me, with him.

We reached Krugersdorp safely, having been driven there by Mr. Hofmeyer, jun., in the selfsame little wagonette that had taken us from Krugersdorp to the farm nearly twelve months previously.

We had the company of some of the jolliest girls I had seen in the country; and I parted, I am afraid, with a little heartache. However, I promised to return again very shortly, which mayhap helped a certain fair lassie to control her feelings.

Bloemfontein was reached three days later, and Mr. Coetzee, sen., was at the station to meet his son, together with a few very old friends, who gave us both a most cordial reception. Coetzee and I parted on the platform, and it was a sad farewell, after our close friendship and intimate intercourse of the previous twelve months, but we were destined to form the nucleus of another and more important expedition later, an expedition which I hope to refer to in another book.

So ended another of my expeditions, some perilous, all infinitely interesting, into the little-known interior of the great continent of Africa.

CHAPTER XI

BIG GAME IN BECHUANALAND

My brother joins me—Another expedition—Our native companions—British Spheres of Influence—Vaal River Diamond Fields—Across the Vaal—Warrenton, Taungs, Vryburg, Mafeking—Over the border—Sport commences—Game-birds as biltong—Adventure with a leopard—A narrow escape—Another meeting with Khama—Crossing the Macloutsie—Lions, jackals, hyænas, and giraffes—After ostriches—A treacherous native—Betrayed, a serious dilemma.

ONE would think, after my experiences of the previous few years in South and Central Africa, that I would yearn to return to the land of my birth, the dear old homeland, so far away in a quiet little village in Norfolk. But as with hundreds of others, so with myself. The superb African climate, the glorious uncertainty in exploration and pioneering as to what will happen next, or what will be the fresh turn of Fortune's wheel impart indelible impressions, and, having once tasted the joys of the free and untrammelled life of the hunter and explorer, the craving for more never leaves one. Yes, I still longed for the open, free life of the interior, but I little thought as yet to what new and unknown territories my travels would lead me.

It happened in this way: one day my brother and

myself were sitting in a stuffy office in Bloemfontein, when some argument or other cropped up as to the as yet unexplored regions of the sub-continent to the northward, and in order to decide a certain knotty point we there and then agreed that we would go on a hunting expedition into the interior. Rather an expensive way of settling an argument, the reader will say, but as my brother had only just arrived from England, I suppose my experiences had inspired him a little, and he wanted to see and judge for himself, while my own thirst for further exploring, as I have already said, was again upon me. The opportunity came, and a few weeks later saw my brother and myself in Kimberley, preparing for an expedition for the purpose of hunting and exploring in the as yet little-known territories north-west of Matabeleland. At this period, I should add, Matabeleland was not under the British Flag.

It did not take us long to prepare, as our party was small, consisting of three Cape boys, two other natives, spare men, and our two selves. Our conveyances were a Cape cart drawn by six oxen, and a well fitted-up half-tent wagon, drawn by a span of sixteen oxen. We also had one good horse each. Our firearms were of a varied nature, including a Snider carbine, a Martini Henry rifle, and a twelve-bore, shot and ball combination gun each, besides, as spare guns, one double-barrelled express rifle, two Colt lightning repeaters, and ten muskets. Small magazines were fixed in the wagon, one at each end, which were well stocked with powder, shot, cartridges, lead and mould, and also reloading machines.

My previous experience had taught me not to load the wagon with tinned meats and liquors, but with only the most necessary articles, such as fine meal,

salt, coffee, sugar, and a few other camp essentials. I had to remind my brother that this was a hunting expedition, as he had prepared a long list of articles which he deemed we should require, and although I tried hard to convince him that it was not a picnic, he could not see it in quite the same light as a seasoned hunter, so he wisely, or unwisely, laid in a small stock of tinned productions.

The Cape boys whom we had engaged were all old hands, and had seen much big-game hunting in different parts of the country. Their names were Jasper, Isaac, and Lucas. The last, although a young man, had had some very trying experiences while with the Boers in the early days of the Transvaal, but he had such an open, honest face, and such a nice way of talking (in the Dutch language, of course), that I took to the man at once, and picked him out as my special servant. His reliability and worthiness we shall see later.

I remember well it was on a perfect morning that we bade adieu to our old friends in Kimberley, a good many of whom accompanied us for about five miles on our ever-memorable trip Northward Ho! Three years previously a large party had left for this unexplored north from De Beers' Mines, and now and again news would come through that gold was to be found everywhere. Other reports came down saying just the reverse, and moreover, that it was a most unhealthy country, and that the Matabele were a ferocious and powerful race, a tribe not to be trifled with. Few people had ever penetrated far north of Khama's land. Maps of Africa could be bought everywhere, and were being sold in hundreds all over Great Britain, but of what use were they? No one had ever penetrated into the interior, with the exception

of Livingstone, who reached as far as Lake Tanganyika, and Stanley, who had crossed in a straight line from east to west, but the southern portion of Central Africa was as yet very partially explored.

These maps were obtainable in Africa, and one saw written across them in large letters, "Khalahari Desert," or "British Sphere of Influence." It is an easy matter for your statesman to take a map of Africa and with a coloured pencil mark off certain portions as British and other portions as German and French, and so on ; but had white men of any nationality ever set foot in these "spheres of influence" ? Few, if any. On this point it would be easy for me to prove to the reader that portions were, and are, under the white man's dominion on paper only.

Four days' journey brought us to the famous Vaal River Diamond Diggings of Klipdam, Hebron, and Warrenton. These towns are situated on the bank of the Vaal River, and it was a wonderful sight to see miles of claims where a new rush had taken place. Every one was busy—men and women all toiling under the fierce African sun to get the precious gems. These towns could then tell tales of families actually starving, while others were rolling in luxury. But in whatever circumstances they were, rich or poor, the phase did not last long in the majority of cases. If a man found a valuable stone, he was so pleased with his sudden good-fortune that he would invariably knock off work for the time being and treat all his friends on the proceeds for weeks. Or perhaps he would go down to the coast for a holiday, and when all his money was gone would return and commence work again, and would once more toil on for many weeks without finding enough diamonds to pay even for his native labour, until at last he would have

no money to buy food. He would then go to one of the many shopkeepers to whom he had been a good customer, and obtain from him a bag of meal on credit. Thus the poor beggar, who a few weeks previously was flinging his wealth about, was reduced to subsisting on mealie-pap until his luck turned, if ever it did.

While we were there we were told by a store-keeper that only a few days previously a man had arrived from the Old Country, having heard of the wonderful finds on the diggings. With a very slender purse he had purchased the necessary outfit, which cost him about £60, and commenced prospecting his claim. He had only been at work eight weeks when he found a valuable stone, which he sold for £3,400, and, like a wise man, he did not stop to try and add to his good-fortune, but, giving the whole of his plant and outfit to some poor miner, he immediately left the diggings. But this is only one case of good-fortune that we hear of against the hundreds of others where the digger makes barely enough to subsist on. Yes, the hardships are many and the prizes few! I have myself known young fellows, who have given up good situations to try their luck at the diggings, and in every instance they were doomed to ultimate disappointment and sometimes worse. Good finds manage, somehow, to get into the newspapers, and the news is read and re-read by the prospective fortune-hunter until he can restrain himself no longer. Although his present appointment may be envied by many, he must try his luck, and so foolishly he gives up a certainty for an uncertainty. Still in some cases the experience does him all the good in the world, especially if, being naturally an idler, his circumstances become so reduced that the pick and shovel

must be wielded by no other hands than his own or he must starve. He then learns the value of a good situation, and the next time he manages to get into one he is all the better for his experience.

We crossed the pontoon at Warrenton, the Vaal River being too deep, and three days' steady trek through a very dry country brought us to the village of Taungs. This was a noteworthy place of some ten thousand souls, whose chief was Molala. There were three stores in the village, and a small detachment of white police, commanded by the magistrate, Major Lowe. Our party was stopped at this place owing to our not having any licence to shoot game, a fact which detained us about three days, as the seat of government was at Vryburg, distant about one day's ride on horseback. As we were now in British Bechuanaland, our Cape Colony licences were of no use, and a new licence was issued to each of us, our wagons were inspected, the number of guns taken, and a pass for the same handed to us, authorising us to travel through the territory of Bechuanaland and Mashonaland as hunters.

We made the acquaintance here of a young fellow by name Bolton (who was afterwards killed by the Phokwani rebels *), who had just arrived from the Old Country. He had already found out a few places where game was abundant, and, as he was a good sportsman, we decided upon having a day with our shot-guns, and for this purpose left on horseback for a place called Dry Harts. How it got that name no one seemed to know, as it was far from being dry. The place is a little distance from the main road, and consists of what is known in South Africa as a vlei. In the Old Country it would be termed a

* Phokwani, Vryburg.

lake, being a sheet of water about two miles square and about five feet deep, with plenty of reeds, which give shelter to hundreds of wild duck and fowl. We were all eager for the fray, seeing so much game in front of us, but in order to get at the birds were forced to wade in and pick our way among the reeds. Some preferred riding in, but without saddles, a splendid method of getting out to the game, for we must have shot between us over one hundred brace of fowl and duck that day. About noon we picked out a nice camping-ground near the road, where the wagons, which arrived about sunset that day, could outspan. Our friend Mr. Bolton left for Taungs that evening, his horse well laden with game. Little did we think that a few years afterwards this fine specimen of a young Briton would be murdered by one of the cowardly natives of Phokwani.

The wild fowl had to be skinned, it being impossible to pluck the feathers in the usual way, and when cleaned and dried in the sun as biltong it had a most delicious taste. This was our first day's sport, and we took good advantage of the opportunity to provide ourselves with plenty of provisions in the way of dried fowl. The next day was spent in the same manner, our bag being rather smaller, owing to the game being scared by the previous day's shooting.

A police camp was stationed at this place, consisting of four men of the Bechuanaland Border Police, who were very glad to meet us, seeing, as they did, very few white faces in this remote spot. Owing to the terrible state of the road, or track, our wagons got stuck in a large mud-hole, and had to be absolutely dug out, which took us the best part of the next day. Each of us had to turn navvy, and

a fearful struggle it was. Nevertheless, the country hereabouts was very parched, and although the surface was of a sandy nature, and well suited for cattle, owing to the absence of water the veldt was wild and little traversed.

We reached Vryburg after eight days' trekking from Taungs. The town of Vryburg is built about two miles from the railway station, which was just about being completed, and was then a very straggling sort of place. Good business seemed to be done by the few merchants, including two Arab traders. Being the seat of government for Bechuanaland, Vryburg was already an important centre, and there were two well-conducted hotels there, which seemed to be in a very flourishing condition. Nevertheless we were not very favourably impressed with the seat of the Bechuanaland Government, and only spent two days there. I must mention that just at the time of our visit it was rumoured that Vryburg was about to become a second Kimberley, owing to diamonds being found on the commonage, and on some farms close by. We were privately advised that the diamonds were first put into the ground—that is, the place was “salted”—and as nothing came of the “discoveries,” though some years have now passed since the excitement caused by the finding of diamonds there, it proves, I think, that my informant was quite right.

Mafeking being the next town of any importance, I will pass over the villages en route, as the whole country in this hundred miles stretch is much the same. There was nothing to relieve the monotony of the continuous bush and plain for the whole distance, with the exception of the native village of Kunana. This place is just over the border, and in the Trans-

vaal, but the quickest route being this way, we passed through the village. The next place was Maritzani, which consisted of a population of about two thousand natives, a white storekeeper, and a detachment of police.

Having reached Mafeking after a thirteen-days' weary journey from Vryburg, we were very glad to rest ourselves for two days on the banks of the Molopo River, which is a sleepy stream within a few hundred yards of the town of Mafeking, which has since become so famous in history. The township was well laid out. It was even then said that Mafeking was the key of the north, and it has certainly proved itself an important centre since. It consisted then of about six shops, two hotels, a number of public-houses, and about a dozen houses in the course of erection. Business seemed very brisk, and every one was busy. Close by was the native town, consisting of a population of about three thousand souls, governed by a chief named Montsioa, whom I found to be a very nice old man. When we visited him he was seated under a large tree in front of his hut, surrounded by a number of his councillors, but it was pitiful to see the old gentleman, as he was suffering from acute dropsy. He was formerly one of the most powerful of the Bechuanaland chiefs, and withstood the Boer invasion of his country for a number of years, until at last they became too strong for him, and it was he who invited the British to take over his country, which was done, as the outcome of an expedition under Sir Charles Warren, who secured for the British Government an enormous tract of country. As a matter of fact and historical record it was through that great statesman, Cecil Rhodes, that notice was taken of Montsioa's appeal,

and the gate and key to Rhodesia thereby secured. Shortly after my visit the old gentleman passed away.

As small-pox was prevalent in the town, our stay at Mafeking was limited to three days, during which time we made the acquaintance of all the Border Police officers, who were very kind to us in showing us round their large camp, also the native town. After leaving Mafeking, a day's journey brought us to the village of Ramathlabana, and we now entered the Protectorate. Nine days' trekking brought us to the large native town of Ramoutsa, where there were two stores and a police camp, consisting of four men. The country through which we had passed was sparsely populated, very dry, and overgrown with scrub, but well suited for cattle-raising, as the veldt was rich.

After leaving Ramoutsa, our best road to the north being again through a portion of the Transvaal, we crossed the border, formed by the Notwani River, after resting our oxen for a day. Just as we had got through the drift we experienced a heavy downpour of rain, which continued for two days, and a most horrible time we spent. What made it worse was that our cook could get nothing to make a fire with, so for two days we had nothing hot either to eat or drink, which made it additionally miserable for the whole party. We were right glad on the morning of the third day to see the glorious sun rise clear and bright. However, as the roads were too soft to travel, we continued our stay for another day, in order to allow the large quantity of water to drain from the track, as we should otherwise have run the risk of getting our wagon stuck in one of the large soakages, of which there were many in this part of the country. The wild fowl we had shot at

Dry Harts some weeks ago were thoroughly enjoyed when cooked, and our wholesome, savoury fare put us all in a good-humour again. A little explanation is here necessary regarding this provender. It had been dried in the sun as biltong, as the reader will remember, at Dry Harts, and packed away, so that when fresh game was unobtainable it could be brought out at the right moment, when it would be greatly appreciated, as on this present occasion. The taste is not unlike venison, and if ever any of my readers should happen to travel in South Africa, if they remember to preserve this biltong they will be able to enjoy a good meal whenever they desire it.

The town of Gaberones, our next halting-place, was reached after a two-days' trek. This village consisted of a fairly large native population, on the one side of the river and a few storekeepers on the other. The natives were well governed by their chief, whose name was Gaberones. A fairly large police camp was situated at a little distance from the village, where a well-chosen force is kept in case of any trouble with the natives. As this was nearly the last village we should pass through on our journey northwards, when a few miles away we prepared ourselves for hunting. The country we were now entering was of a bushy nature, and told us that we were fast leaving behind us civilisation and were entering the wild north. Hunting clothes were donned, consisting of skin breeches, woollen shirts, and bandolier, as some term the belt, and hold-all, which every one is acquainted with. It does, in fact, hold all that is necessary in the bush, such as knife, pouch, pipe, and other essentials.

A day's travelling along the Notwani River brought us right amongst the fleeter game, the bush here being very thick. However, no antelopes were to be seen, so we had to content ourselves with pheasants and partridges, of which some splendid bags were brought into camp. We tried rather a novel way of preserving the flesh of this kind of game, boiling the birds until the flesh could be easily shaken from the bones, and then packed a large biscuit-tin with the flesh, taking care to use plenty of salt and pepper. We found this food very palatable, and it also came in handy when game was scarce, which was often the case.

When nearing the junction of the Notwani and Crocodile Rivers we were forced to dig away a large piece of the embankment in order to enable us to cross, which we did without accident, arriving at Palla Camp a few hours afterwards. Here we soon found out our old friends, who, it will be remembered, had helped us to cross from the Transvaal side of the Crocodile River, when Coetzee's party went up towards the interior, a few months previously.

Close to the junction, and between the two rivers, an enterprising firm from Mafeking had built a store and hotel, and to the latter place we adjourned. The manager, a Mr. Werner, we found a most obliging gentleman, who was very pleased to see some white faces, and a good time we spent while there.

There is a small native village about a mile distant, the chief of which was a brother of Khama, by name Kumani. This chief used to live in the same stretch of country as his brother, but Khama was the recognised chief of the people, and owing to his

brother's obstinacy in continuing to brew a kind of drink known as Kaffir beer, Khama at last turned him out of his territory. He had often warned his brother that he would not allow this stuff to be brewed, until he could bear it no longer, so he, collecting his men together, had him transported and exiled to the place where he now is. Although Kumani has no legal right to his present territory, the Transvaal authorities had allowed him to remain undisturbed.

Palla Camp has the reputation of being a white man's grave, owing to fever being prevalent at certain times of the year, and our friends at the camp informed us that they could already boast of a small churchyard. We made no stay here, but trekked on, keeping close to the Crocodile River for six days.

On the fourth day after leaving Palla Camp we had a rather strange adventure, which should not be passed unnoticed. As I have already said, we took the road running close by the river, and very early on the morning of the fourth day we prepared for a good hunt along the bank, and it was while on this hunting excursion that the affair which I am about to relate occurred. We were both armed with Snider carbines, and, proceeding along the bank of the river, were about three miles from the camp and within a hundred yards of the bank, when we noticed a rather worn track, such as is usually made by big game. We followed this track, the bush being so thick that we could only see about a few feet on either side of us, and for about fifteen feet in front. As we picked our way carefully along I half-cocked the hammer of my rifle, Lucas following suit, as he was only a few yards behind me. We had

been slowly and silently toiling along the path for about half an hour, and it seemed as if the forest got thicker and thicker as we advanced. Nothing could be seen or heard, and everything around us seemed to be wrapped in a deathly silence. The path was twisted like the figure 8 in many places, and on turning one of these corners I saw a sight that will live in my memory until my dying day. I had come within fifteen feet of a large leopard with her two cubs. Now, reader, just imagine the position for a moment. All around was bush, in front a small clear space about fifteen feet square, and at the further side, only a few feet away, this "tiger" and her cubs were crouching. Everything that passed which decided whether I should pen these lines or not could not have lasted more than four seconds. But as a matter of fact to me it seemed as if they were long minutes instead of seconds. The tiger's eyes while preparing herself for a spring were like coals of fire, and her snarl was enough to make one shake with fear; her fangs seemed to me like elephants' tusks. At that instant I brought my carbine to my hip, there being no time to raise it to my shoulder, and I fired. "My God!" I shouted, "I have missed!" but immediately after I noticed a small stream of blood trickling down her forehead. The animal seemed dazed, and swayed to one side, but only for a second, and pulling herself together, she made ready to spring. My rifle being discharged, and having no time to reload, I did the only thing I could think of. I took hold of the muzzle of my rifle with my two hands, with the intention of using the butt as a club, and thus stood waiting for that deadly charge, which too frequently means an awful death for the unfortunate hunter. As the animal

sprang I stepped on one side, and with all the force I could muster delivered my blow full between those awful jaws as she neared me. Just as her haunches were leaving the ground I heard an explosion within a few feet of my head. It was the report of Lucas's rifle, and not an instant too soon, for the tiger, after receiving the shot, had not the strength to rise for another spring. She had alighted within less than a yard of my foot, with a fearful thud, and blood was trickling from her side, just behind the shoulder. Her death agonies were terrible to witness, the ground being torn up in a circle of about five feet, and a young tree of some four inches in diameter was dragged from its roots in her death struggle, which was ended by a second bullet from Lucas's rifle. As soon as our excitement had somewhat cooled down we commenced searching for the cubs, but although we hunted for fully two hours, they were nowhere to be found, and we therefore set about skinning the noble beast we had just killed. I found that my bullet had not penetrated the animal's head, but had merely grazed the skull, making its exit after travelling along for about five inches.

It did not take us long to skin the animal, and then we started off straight for our camp, not caring to shoot anything else that day. The claws of the beast I have since given away to different friends, with the exception of one, which I still keep, together with a tobacco-pouch which I had made from the skin; and these two articles will always be retained by me as souvenirs of my first encounter with a "tiger."

The next large native town was Palachwe, the seat of government of the great chief of Bamangwato. My old friend Khama was both surprised and pleased

to meet me again, and we had many a long chat together, the chief topic of conversation being his relations with the President of the Transvaal on the one side and with the great Lobengula, chief of the Matabele, on the other. To save himself from being eaten up, as he termed it, he had called in, or rather had come under the protection of the British Flag, and he proudly pointed out to me a police station, representing British authority.

During our stay here we obtained fresh licences from the magistrate, Mr. Moffatt, and, as we were now close to the hunting grounds, did not delay longer than possible. We therefore took a hearty leave of Khama. He warned us, however, to be careful, as Lobengula was preparing himself against the white people. The track leading from Khama's town was in a very bad state, and in one place there was a seven-mile stretch of sand, which strained the hoofs of our cattle severely, so that we were forced to shoe them. About four days after we passed through a nice forest, but with no water. If a hunter, however, should happen to be in that part of the country, I may mention that at the very edge of the forest, and to the west of the road, he will find water on the top of some flat rocks. I have no doubt it will impress some of my readers as strange that water is to be found on the summit of rocks! It is, however, a fact. Nature has intended the rocks to hold water, having shaped them like a basin, and although they are only about four inches deep, it is a curious fact that our cattle could not drain these pools of their supply, and we could not by any means discover how the water came through the rocks. The phenomenon perplexed us greatly, as it has perplexed others who have come across it.

About four days' hard trekking brought us to the Magolapsie River. The drift through this river was very bad, the sand being in places four feet deep, and it took us the greater part of two days to get our conveyances through. The cattle suffered greatly from thirst, and we had to dig in the dry bed of the river and give them water from buckets, and were glad indeed when the night came on, so that we could trek away from this dismal place.

The next river to be crossed was the Macloutsie River, which was also dry, with the exception of small pools of water at the sides. Our oxen being very tired, the camp was pitched on the banks of the river, and having rested, on the second day, together with two of our boys, I went for a hunt to the eastward, and had some very good sport, shooting two wildebeeste and one sable antelope. On returning to camp my brother said that the night previous he had heard for the first time a couple of lions roaring, but acting on the advice of our old native hunters, he decided not to go out of the camp, but wait until they should make an attack. I was naturally rather excited on hearing this, and accordingly prepared to receive visitors should they appear; but although we stayed there for another two nights and days, we heard nothing further.

The veldt, as we made our way northwards, began now to have the appearance of a different country altogether from what we had passed through during the last few weeks. In the first place, hills loomed up before us instead of the desert. Game was plentiful, as our camp very plainly told after a hard day's hunting here and there along the road, and we all began to feel that we had commenced sport in real earnest at last.

The next river was the Shashi, and we encamped on the south bank, and about half a mile to the west of the forest, in order to reload our cartridge-cases, overhaul our guns, and put our hunting kit thoroughly in order. At night-time we were often kept awake by the yelling of hyænas and jackals, and the roaring of lions now and again in the far distance, at the sound of which our oxen visibly trembled. It was while camping here that a Makalaka native came to the camp and told us that he knew where we could shoot ostriches, and added that if we gave him a musket he would go with us and show us. As I had had previous experience of native treachery, I told him to make himself scarce, and from that time we also took the precaution of keeping watch at night. Our camp was placed in such a position that there was a clear space of about four hundred yards down to the river-bank, where there was a deep pool of water. It was while encamped here that our wishes were one night fulfilled in the shape of a visit from our friends the lions. We were not, however, fortunate enough to secure a good specimen of a lion's skin at this place, and, it must be told, though not to our credit, that this visit proved that we were altogether unprepared. We found that the king of the forest in his cage and in his wild state were two different objects altogether. It was a very bright moonlight night, and three or four of them were sighted close to the bank of the river. My old native hunter said—

“Now is your time to kill a lion with your own gun. This is a chance you will not get again. Try your skill.”

I readily admit that the feelings of my brother and myself for the moment were such that the lions could

have taken the whole lot of our cattle without our raising as much as a finger to repel their attack. It is all very well for any one sitting in an arm-chair to talk about facing a lion, but I can assure my readers he is a terrible animal when seen in his wild state, and it takes a man with nerves of iron to face him with coolness, for the first time at any rate. I have challenged, and still challenge, the greatest hunter in the world to tell me that he faced his first lion without a quiver of his nerves.

We eventually agreed that if we all fired together we should be on the safe side. This we did on a given signal, and, be it said, not perhaps to our honour, that one lion did fall to the guns of the whole party instead of to one of us. We killed this one lion by firing a volley, so that none of us could claim the highest distinction known amongst big-game hunters.

About two days after this incident a native visited our camp and brought in the same report as to ostriches as had his predecessor. After a consultation it was decided that Lucas and myself should take two of the riding oxen and two pack-oxen, and with this native as a guide should set off in search of the supposed hunting grounds of the ostriches. We therefore bade adieu to the rest of the party, and taking with us plenty of ammunition, water, and dried meat, set off on what I thought would be about a six-days' hunt.

We kept along the river-bank for three days, encamping at night-time. Our guide was very willing, and helped us to keep up a big fire, which was absolutely necessary every night from sundown to sunrise. He seemed quite proud of the fact that he was to become the possessor of a gun. His language was

not unlike Zulu, and Lucas, knowing most of the Kaffir dialects, understood this man fairly well, and so we obtained a good deal of information from him about that part of the country.

On the fourth day after leaving my brother we saw a large herd of giraffe, but our guide asked us not to fire, as the ostriches, if there were any in the vicinity, would clear and run for miles. We therefore pushed on until the seventh day, when our guide took a course direct at right angles to the river, to the westward. The country traversed was very thickly wooded in places, with deep valleys, but not a human being could be seen anywhere, and there was very little game. I at last began to become suspicious of our guide, and asked him a variety of questions as to where he had come from, but could only obtain from him the reply, "Just a little further on, perhaps two suns." We kept on our guard, however, and decided to follow this fellow for another couple of days, at any rate, and if we did not by that time see any ostriches we would return, as our provisions were beginning to get low.

We camped on the ninth evening in a small clump of trees, and after having seen that a good supply of firewood was at hand, and that the oxen were properly tethered, Lucas and myself sat down to smoke our pipes and discuss the advisability of commencing our return journey on the morrow. Our guide was sitting opposite to us on the other side of the fire, and was, as usual, talking to himself about the wonderful shooting-iron, as he called it, of which he would soon be the possessor, according to the agreement made with him at the camp. This was to the effect that if he would guide us to the hunting grounds, and show us the ostriches, and we were successful in

bagging not less than six, he was to receive a musket for his services.

At my bidding Lucas interpreted the following words to him, as near as I can remember them : " You are a Makalaka dog, and must understand that we are now more than four days' journey from the supposed haunt of the ostriches. I now therefore tell you that I suspect foul play, and if anything happens in this way you shall be shot. Now you must tell the truth. Do not play with the white man, or you will be hung up to this tree. Now, you dog, listen to my words and be careful what you are doing, and do not attempt to trifle with us. If there are no ostriches in this part of the country we shall return on the morrow and take you with us back to our camp, where we shall inflict such punishment on you as we may think you rightly deserve.

Pointing to the musket lying by my side, I said—

" I have agreed to give to you this on the condition that you fulfil the agreement you have made, otherwise, as I have said, I shall hang you up on this tree." I did not understand the answer the native made to Lucas, but that he was greatly alarmed I could plainly see, for while he was arguing some point or other, Lucas held up his hands and stopped him in the middle of some sentence, saying as he turned to me, " Master, this man is playing us false." And without more ado he sprung upon the man and held him fast by the throat until I had fastened his hands and tied him to a tree close by.

We were now in a serious predicament. It was too far, we thought, to take the man all the way back to camp, as it would mean that one, or both of us, would have to keep guard over him, and even then the chances were that he would slip away from

us. Lucas suggested hanging him up, to which I would not agree. I decided at once, however, that he would only be a bother to us if we took him with us, while, on the other hand, if we let him loose, he would probably follow us, and perhaps do us and our cattle some harm. I therefore told Lucas to tie the man in such a manner to the tree that he could, with some little exertion, get free, and he, thinking he had escaped us, would keep at a distance. We therefore took this course, but in order to frighten the man, told him that his spirit would be with his fathers as the sun rose up on the morrow. We then laid ourselves down again by the fire, taking good care that our prisoner could get free without our noticing him, which he did, about an hour before daybreak.

Our position, I think the reader will agree, at that time was not to be envied, and I was more than annoyed at being led away by this fellow. But these things will happen to even the most careful and experienced of hunters, no matter how well his plans may be laid.

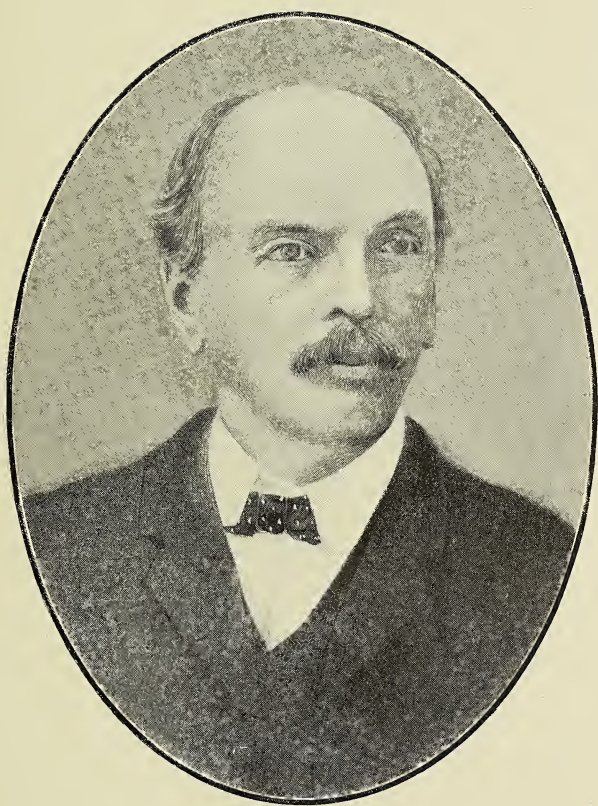
CHAPTER XII

A PRISONER AMONG THE NATIVES OF CENTRAL AFRICA

Our attempt to return—The wonderful Baobab—Surprised by natives—We are taken prisoners—Arrival at the village—Striking reception by the chief and his people—Friendly savages—Worship of the white man's gun—Proof of its power—Alarm of the natives—We go wildebeeste hunting—I am elected a member of the chief's council—The native and the gorilla—He avenges his wife's death.

THE return journey was commenced the following morning, and we pushed on all day, but although we had previously taken good care to take our landmarks, we could not pick them up again anywhere. The country seemed to have the same features, no matter which way we looked, and, try as we would, we could not make out whether we had come over a certain hill, or whether we had passed to the right of it or to the left. I finally decided to strike due south, so as to come out somewhere between Khama's town and our camp as near as I could calculate, for I should mention that we had no compass with us. Losing ourselves completely we now wandered about aimlessly for some eight days after we had got rid of our guide, and were in a bad way as regards food and water.

Our oxen were almost exhausted, but when



DR. JAMESON.
(A recent portrait.)

sighting a large Baobab tree about half-way up the slope of a small hill, they seemed to make straight for it. We did not attempt to turn them, but just let them go straight on, for we had almost given up the idea of ever finding the right track again. It seemed as if the wilderness had no end to it.

The Baobab, as the reader probably knows, is a shady tree, and it struck me then that the oxen, although to all appearances stupid creatures, had at least sense enough to know that they could find shelter from the fierce rays of the sun under this beautiful tree. At any rate they made for the tree in a line as straight as a rifle range, and when they got under its shadow they immediately commenced licking the bark. It was indeed a curious performance, but the why and wherefore we shall directly see. I at once took an axe and chopped a hole in the wood, which was of a very pulpy nature, but still I could see nothing extraordinary. The poor animals then commenced bellowing, and seemed to tell us there was something in the tree. Lucas suggested that he should climb to the top, which he did, and immediately the man cried out for joy, for in the hollow where the branches start was a small pool of water. The tree, I should say, was about 15 feet in diameter, and about 35 feet to 40 feet high. I can assure my readers we both uttered a prayer of joy when water was thus found, and we were saved from a fearful death. We gave our oxen plenty of water, as much as they could drink, but the poor animals could not eat, and simply laid themselves down under the shadow of the tree, and rested for the whole of that day. We ourselves were also, as may be naturally supposed, utterly exhausted, but

managed to collect a little firewood, for our lives might depend upon that during the coming night, although there was no sign of game or lions to be seen anywhere, nor of their spoor. Neither was there any feathered game to be seen or heard; everything seemed dead and hushed in silence, while all around us was the thick, impenetrable forest of tall, gigantic trees, but with very little undergrowth.

On the second day after discovering the water, Lucas and myself, leaving our cattle grazing around the tree which we called our camp, went into the forest in search of game, and that evening about sundown we managed by good chance to shoot a small buck, which, I can assure my readers, we were greatly in need of. We were afraid to take the carcase to our camp, so cut it up on the spot, taking only a portion of the flesh with us. Needless almost to say, we did this in order not to attract wild dogs, jackals, or lions towards the camp.

We enjoyed a hearty meal that evening, washing it down with copious draughts from the hollow of the tree. As naturally will be supposed, we did not care to leave our shelter at present; indeed, until we had found more water it would have been foolish to do so. We therefore remained at this place for about nine days, as near as I can remember, when one morning, just as the day was dawning, a body of blacks suddenly appeared, as if out of the ground, at the foot of the hill, who advanced to within about fifty yards of us. There were about twenty of these savages altogether, and one of them, evidently the leader of the party, was dressed in skins and adorned with ostrich feathers. They were all armed with spears such as we had never seen in any part of Africa before, the weapons being long and very broad.

As I have said, they came within fifty paces, when I unslung my Colt lightning repeater rifle, and was prepared to sell my life dearly, as I knew I could account for fourteen of these fellows, while Lucas could do some execution among the rest. They were all tall, well-built men, and although we were prepared to defend ourselves to the bitter end, if it came to that, it was rather pleasant to see the faces of human beings again.

The leader of the party now held up his left hand, whereupon all his followers sat themselves down on the ground, and lifting up his spear by the middle of the shaft, enough for me to see that he was not making ready to throw it at us, he cast it down on the ground in front of him. He then held both his hands up, so that I could see he was unarmed. I immediately did the same, carefully placing my gun in a handy position, in fact I lifted it above my head and placed it on the ground at my feet, at the same time raising my hands to show him that I also was unarmed. He then came forward with a handful of grass which he plucked out of the ground, and threw it at my feet. I stretched out my hand to shake hands with him and he took hold of my thumb. I naturally thought it was their way of saluting, which I afterwards found out was correct. I motioned to him to sit down on the ground at one side of the fire, at the same time seating myself on the other side. Lucas, in the meantime, was watching the proceedings. The chief spoke a peculiar dialect, which was to some extent similar to that spoken by the native guide who had led us astray some weeks before. On seeing that we could not understand him, he immediately changed it to one which Lucas could with little

difficulty comprehend, and which I was very glad to hear. The man spoke a sort of Zulu dialect, with which Lucas was tolerably well acquainted.

The man's words were as follows :—

“I have been sent by the great chief Robongo, and his words to me were : ‘There is a white man hunting in my country. Go, find him, and bring him to me, or his head. Go, and return not until you have found this white man, or I shall have your head.’ These are my orders.”

On Lucas interpreting this to me, I informed the chief that we should be ready to start after we had partaken of a little breakfast. The man then became communicative, and proved to be rather an intelligent sort of a native. When I say intelligent, I mean that he was not of the ordinary class of South African nigger. He ordered up three of his men, whom he instructed to look after the cattle. He also told me before starting, that his orders were, if possible, not to harm the white man, but to bring him to the king's palace without injury, and that anything he might ask for on the road should be given him. And with these words in my ears we commenced the journey northwards.

My opinion of these people was that they were not of a low savage type. They were, indeed, fine strapping fellows, with a good conception of military organisation, for they divided themselves, while on the march, in such a manner that there were some in front and behind us, some on our right and some on our left, so that had we wished to escape we could not have succeeded. We passed through very lovely country, but could see no inhabitants.

Under the circumstances I must say that we enjoyed ourselves very much, as there were no hard-

ships by the way. We could shoot, which we did ; we had plenty of water at the different points along the route ; and had the circumstances been different so that we could know what was going to happen, I, for my part at any rate, should have enjoyed myself immensely, especially after the hardships we had lately gone through.

Our escort kept on the march for five days, travelling the whole time, except at night ; and on the fifth day, about midday, we could see by the tilled lands that we were again approaching a native town of some importance. We continued our way until we reached the top of a small rise of the ground, from which point, looking between two small hills, I could see a large native town, surrounded by a thick wall, or palisade, consisting of huge trunks of trees lashed together, and with openings only here and there. All around this wall, through which we passed half an hour later, the natives simply swarmed like bees from a bee-hive, surrounding us on every side. There were no streets in the town, which was simply dotted here and there with huts.

I felt my position very keenly, for I was practically a prisoner, and knew not what was going to happen to me. In a few minutes, amid the hand-clapping and shouting of men and women, we suddenly turned a corner and came in front of a large hut. Here I was told to dismount my ox and enter. I therefore unslung the rifle from my shoulder and entered, placing my weapon in a corner of the hut. The latter was quite empty, and only a few blocks of tree-trunks were lying about, which, I could see, had been used as stools. I sat down upon one of them and waited, not knowing what was going to happen.

The native in charge of the party, I have omitted to say, was named Giba. He entered the hut shortly afterwards with a large gourd of native beer, some meat, and a kind of vegetable not unlike beans, to which both Lucas and myself did full justice. A few minutes afterwards the same man brought us in two mats, being the usual grass mat used by the South Central African native to lie upon. These being given to us, we rested ourselves upon them for about two hours, when suddenly a great noise of shouting and clapping of hands could be heard outside the hut, which gradually grew louder and louder, until we guessed that the whole population of the town was assembling outside, having in view some important purpose or other. The first man to enter was Giba, followed by a very old man, whom Giba pointed out to us as his father, and who was the great chief we had heard him speak of. Behind him followed a man carrying a huge stool, which he set down in such a position that the chief could talk to me as I was resting on the mat. The hut was very soon filled with people, when Giba stood up and made a long speech to his father and to the people present. After Giba had finished speaking, his father seemed very much moved, and on his son sitting down he also made a speech, remaining seated. His words were received with great satisfaction by his councillors, as I took them to be, for they were all old men, and seemed to be the advisers of the king or chief. This I afterwards found to be correct; indeed, among African native tribes these councils of the chiefs are always composed of elderly men.

No further formalities were gone through after the king had spoken, and with loud talking among themselves they all left the hut, leaving only Giba

and ourselves. After the din had somewhat subsided I asked the meaning of all this talking and shouting, and, although I was not afraid of anything serious, I was at a loss to understand the object of the proceedings which had just come to a conclusion. Giba explained to me that as I had been very kind to him and to his men, and had made no attempt to escape, his father would treat both Lucas and myself as guests. To this I objected, however, saying that we wanted to get home to our people, and I was talking to him in this strain when he checked me rather suddenly, and said it was no use our attempting to get away from the place, because they would never permit us to depart.

"We shall do you no harm, and you must stay with us," he said.

I then inquired the meaning of his father's words, which were received with so great satisfaction among his councillors. He hesitated at first, but eventually said that the Great Spirit had favoured them, and had sent them a white man who possessed a fire-eating spirit, referring, of course, to my rifle.

He then went on to explain that they had heard much about the white nation and the killing irons they possessed, and now their tribe was able, with the help of the Spirit, to secure one. He mentioned that his father had also given authority to his councillors to instruct the people that we were to be treated with respect, and that everything we asked for would be given us. I pressed him for further information as to what would be expected of us in return, but he said—

"No, white man, we must speak no more of these things now; there will be plenty of time later on," and with these words left the hut.

We could hear by the continual din, which seemed to come nearer and nearer, that there was a large crowd outside, which, judging from the noise, was continually increasing as the hours went by. This infernal din they kept up the whole of that night until daybreak the next morning.

Meantime we had nothing to eat from the time we arrived until sunrise, when the chief's son entered the hut, followed by four native women, each bearing a chunk of newly-cooked meat, some fowls, all steaming hot, maize, and Kaffir beer. This they deposited on the ground and disappeared. Our appetites were sharp, and it needed no invitation for us to commence a hearty meal. Giba then told us that an ox had been killed in our honour, and that the choicest portion had been picked out for us by his father as a token of his and his people's welcome to us. After we had finished our meal Giba told us to follow him. Going through a few courts we entered an open space, thickly crowded with people, who made way for us, shouting as they did so. Giba led the way right through this mass of people and entered a nice-looking hut through a courtyard about twenty feet square. The inside of the hut had a quite respectable appearance, although the only furniture consisted of some logs of wood placed here and there for stools, and a gourd of water. This hut, I was told, was to be my future residence, together with my servant Lucas. I noticed four men in the courtyard, whom I recognised as belonging to the party which had been sent out to bring us in. They were armed in the same manner as when on the march, and these men were put over us as sentries.

I was greatly annoyed at this, and did not fail to let Giba know the exact state of my feelings. He

told me, however, that I was in the chief's power, and it would be better for me to do as I was told, which advice, after a little reflection, I thought it wiser to take.

Shortly afterwards the old chief came in, accompanied by five of his councillors, who also brought with them my rifle, and what few belongings I had. The chief seemed very anxious to know the use of the Spirit—of course referring to my rifle—and I explained it the best way I could. He would not touch the weapon, however—in fact he ordered one of his men to hang it up out of the way while we were talking. I explained that the Spirit was very powerful, insomuch, that if he showed me an ox from among a herd I could point the Spirit to it and it would drop dead. The old man was thunderstruck, and said, to prove my words, he hoped the following morning I should be ready to show him. He talked a great deal about the white nation, and I was somewhat surprised to hear him say that although he was old he had never seen a white man before, but he had heard of some of them hunting in different parts of the country.

I spoke about the guard of four men which he had placed in front of the hut, and that by that act we were being treated as prisoners. At this he only laughed, saying that if we did nothing wrong no harm would come to us. I then said that I wished to return to my country, to which he replied—

“Yes. I will send a man to show you the way to your country, but you must not be in a hurry.” Having spoken thus he refused to say anything further on the matter.

That day I expressed a wish to go out walking, so Lucas and I sallied forth, accompanied by Giba, and

two men of the guard followed at a short distance. Everywhere we went the natives would stare at us and immediately disappear, while the children would scamper away; in fact, on every one's face seemed written "fear."

I found the town was of considerable size, and a good deal larger than I had first thought. It was a veritable Chinese puzzle, and to get out without a guide would have been almost a matter of impossibility. All idea of escaping, therefore, went out of my mind, and I decided to make the best of the situation, thanking my stars that I had not fallen among a dangerous savage tribe, or into the hands of a tyrannical South African chief. When I say savage, I do not mean to say that these people were not savages: they were, in fact, quite wild, and had never seen civilisation in any of its forms—but I had expected to find a bloodthirsty sort of cannibal "nigger" in the interior of Africa, as every other writer, without exception, has so described them. Perhaps it was owing to the example of their chief, who was, to my mind, a kind-hearted man, that the tribe was not so ferocious as these people of Central Africa are usually represented to be. However that may be, I certainly felt at the time, at any rate, that the descriptions given by other writers of the customs and manners of the natives of these regions were incorrect in very many particulars. As I have said, I formed rather a good opinion of the chief, but we shall see later what sort of a man he really was.

We were quite tired when our hut was pointed out to us, but thither, by some roundabout way, we had managed to return, and we now entered. I might mention that we had no idea we were anywhere near our new abode, but thought, in fact, we

were on the other side of the town altogether, which proves what I have just said, that to have escaped from this native town without being noticed would have been a matter of almost sheer impossibility.

Two native girls, the same each day, brought us in our meals at sunrise and sunset. As will be naturally supposed, the food was not of a very varied nature, consisting principally of venison, maize, a kind of bean, and plenty of milk. The food tasted very queer without salt, and I could not make our captors even understand what salt was.

The next morning, at daybreak, I was sent for by the chief, to fulfil, as the messenger said, the promise given to him the previous day. I was then immediately escorted to a large kraal, where there was a herd of mixed cattle. A young calf was pointed out to me as the one upon which it was decided that I should demonstrate whether the Spirit could kill or no.

I remember well that it was a calf of about eighteen months old, coloured black and white, and was about ninety yards distant. I knew that according to the effect of this shot I should be treated well or ill, one way or the other, by the chief. If I happened to miss, my chances of remaining in his favour were very small; in fact, I would probably be treated as an impostor, or perhaps even worse. On the other hand, if I could only steady myself at the critical moment, and make good my aim, I should be able to carry the point I was striving for, which was to keep in the chief's favour, and perhaps I should then be able, with his help, to get out of his country, as it was absolutely impossible to escape him.

There was a large crowd of natives already assembled as I took up my position ready to shoot.

They looked at my rifle anxiously as they whispered to each other. Their eyes were all directed towards it, and scarcely a sound escaped them, with the exception of faint whispering one to the other, as they pointed to the all-mysterious Spirit, as they called it. It was a day they would always remember.

The crowd outside the kraal was also very great, and I can assure my readers that although missing my shot was almost an impossibility, I felt it was one of the most critical moments of my life.

It took a minute or two before the calf could be got to stand still, and, at a distance of about one hundred yards, I waited for a favourable opportunity, so that I could kill the animal with one shot, although I had prepared myself and had slipped six cartridges into the magazine. As the animal turned and faced me and I lifted the rifle to my shoulder, the excitement was intense. I cast my eye carefully along the barrel, and the sight came into line with the white patch of hair on the calf's forehead, when I pulled the trigger and the beast fell. The confusion following the explosion can hardly be described. Men and women shouted and yelled, rushing hither and thither, and left me and Lucas standing alone in the kraal. We walked towards the edge of the enclosure, but not a soul remained where only a few seconds before was a huge throng of people. Now only dust could be seen in clouds, and wild cries rose as the multitude rushed away. I leant against the palisade, and Lucas remarked:—

“Baas, you have done it this time, and we shall hereafter not be troubled.”

We remained where we stood for about five minutes, the calf lying motionless where it was shot, while the other cattle were huddled together terrified.

A little later Giba appeared round the corner of a hut, and seeing us, disappeared again, only to reappear a few minutes after with the chief and a large crowd of his fellows. They went towards the calf, but would not touch it, and then slowly came to me. Giba beckoned for me to put the rifle on the ground which I did, and he then motioned me to come to him, and I advanced. The old chief felt my hands and face, and his first question was whether I was hurt, at which I laughed, and explained to him that the Spirit only worked and did as I told it, and would never hurt man or beast except when ordered by me to do so. All those present had by this time found their tongues, and were followed shortly by those who had so quickly disappeared a few moments before, so that presently a large crowd was again assembled.

I told Lucas to take his knife and commence skinning the animal, which he did, and I took out the heart, and presented it to the chief. At the same time I said—

“My father, take this which the Spirit has given to you. Eat of it, together with your children, and prosperity will follow you during all your days.”

This speech seemed to have a great effect upon him, and he would not allow any of his bearers to touch the heart, but, carrying it himself, left the kraal for his own hut; at the same time beckoning to me to follow, which I did, leaving Lucas and Giba to skin the calf and divide it amongst the people.

Nothing of importance happened for about a week after this incident, and we were beginning to feel at home with these natives, though I was tired of being cooped up in the hot, dusty village. We therefore requested the chief to give us permission to go out

into the forest to hunt. He at first declined to do so, but eventually consented after holding a consultation with his son.

Our hunting party consisted of about forty men, all armed with spears and bows and arrows, I, of course, taking my rifle, and Lucas his muzzle-loader. We had not far to go before we came upon a herd of wildebeeste. Giba had given orders to the men to place themselves in the manner in which I wished them to hunt, which was, in extended order, about twenty paces apart. I arranged that we should hunt the forest in the shape of a half-moon, so that Lucas and myself, together with the chief, being in the centre, I stood the best chance of getting game. As I have said, we came presently upon a herd of wildebeeste. The first beast I fired at dropped, then scrambled to its feet again, and made off. It had, however, only gone about twenty paces when I managed to get a second shot, which caught it at the back of the head, just between the horns, and it dropped immediately. We left one native in charge of the dead animal, and followed quickly after the herd. I was now more fortunate than on the first occasion, as with two shots I managed to bag a cow and a good-sized calf. The natives were then all called in by a peculiar shout, and in a short space of time had skinned and cut the carcasses into pieces, and commenced the journey back to the village. They were in high glee over our prizes, and sang a sort of hunting song, which could be heard at a great distance, and re-echoed through the forest.

We were received in the village with great rejoicing, and the next day, at the usual meeting of the chief's councillors, I was greeted with the request that I should allow myself to be elected a member of

the council, to which I agreed, and professed myself highly honoured. Every morning it was their custom to hold a court for the trial of any offenders, and the chief delivered judgment, in every instance very fairly and impartially; nevertheless, the death sentence was passed very often, and for what we should consider quite trivial offences.

A striking incident happened one day, which I think should find a place here. A poor fellow came crying to the chief when we were at the usual council meeting, saying that a man-monkey had torn his wife to pieces, and asked if the Spirit could not kill this fellow. The chief told the man to go about his business, as if it were an everyday occurrence, but, being interested, I asked the chief to allow me to get information as to how this woman came to be killed by the man-monkey, as they called it, and which I guessed to be a gorilla, although I had neither seen nor heard of these animals in that part of the country. The man's story was to the effect that his wife had gone out that evening into the forest to collect some fire-wood, having one of her children with her. The child, who had remained behind and so had escaped, told the father that its mother had been picking up some wood, when a huge monkey took hold of her by the arm, and with his mouth had caught hold of her by the neck, tearing out her throat, and had then torn her limb from limb.

After the native had thus described to me the terrible fate of his wife, I came to the conclusion that she had been attacked by a gorilla, and as the chief refused to let me go, I told him that if he cared to take one of my "spirits" (the muzzle loader) in his hands, I would trust him with it. He

at first hesitated, but after I had reassured him, he was very eager, and promised to do anything I told him which would in any way assist him in having his revenge upon the gorilla for the loss of his wife. In his gratitude also he wanted to give me half of his kraal of oxen, which numbered about thirty head. I told him that I did not want his cattle, but would help him all the same. So, with the chief's consent, I led him to my hut, and taking Lucas's muzzle-loading gun, showed him what to do, and how to use it, explaining to him something after this style. "Now when you see this man of hair, as you call him, place this iron at your shoulder, holding it straight for his body. When you have done that, wait until you are close to him, and with your finger, press this small piece of iron (meaning, of course, the trigger)." I drilled him several times in this manner before loading the gun, and after getting over the fear of handling the Spirit, as he termed it, he was able to follow out my instructions quite intelligently, and I could see that he was likely to accomplish his object, as he seemed to possess more sense than the average native. I then loaded the gun carefully, and, wishing him good luck and success, let him go.

Several days passed and I heard no more of the man, and had already given up hope of seeing him again, when, on the evening of the fourth day, quite late, he reeled up to my hut, looking a pitiful sight indeed. His right arm was broken, he was fearfully torn about in various parts of the body, and my musket was completely smashed. He had a pitiful tale to tell. He had only taken food for two days, and it was on the third day that he saw the spoor of his quarry. He was frightened to sleep for fear of wild

animals, at which I suggested that he should have climbed up a tree. But he replied that the gorillas also slept in the trees, and that it would not have been safe for him to have slept in one too. Continuing he said that the sun was about in the middle of the heavens on the third day, and being very tired out and exhausted through want of food, he had lain himself down under a tree, and had nearly fallen asleep, when the crackling of a twig caught his ear, and on opening his eyes he saw stealthily approaching him the very thing he was looking for. He had only just time enough to get the gun into position, in the manner I had explained to him, and, waiting until the gorilla was close upon him, he discharged the contents point-blank at it, catching the brute full in the stomach. Being at such close range, the monster was fatally struck, but the man used the gun as a club in finishing him off, with the result that he broke it. The gorilla, however, managed to catch hold of him with one of his hands by the arm, which he broke, at the same time giving him a kick with one of his hind legs which cut the poor fellow to the bone. The reader will thus readily understand what a pitiful sight the unfortunate man presented as he stood before me, and it was a wonder that he had escaped with his life.

What appeared to trouble him most was that he had broken the gun; he seemed to think that the spirit inside would "eat him up" for what he had done. He therefore offered me the whole of his cattle and all his children as compensation for the damage he had done, but I told him that the Spirit would never trouble him, and I wanted neither his cattle nor his children. But he persisted in saying that I must have something in exchange for the

good that the Spirit had done him, in enabling him to get his revenge, and also because he had broken the back of the Spirit. I saw the man was obstinate, so I said: "Now, if you are well, you must go, or you must send some of your servants, to-morrow at daybreak to the place where you killed this gorilla, and have his skin brought to me." I knew at the time that this was a "tall" order to give, as the native is very superstitious; but I repeated my request, and told him to do as I instructed, and that I would accept no other kind of payment.

The following night, about the same time, he returned with a large skin, which I at once saw was the skin of a gorilla, and I got the natives to tan this for me. I afterwards made a cap out of it, and this I have preserved to the present day, and it finds a prominent place in my collection.

CHAPTER XIII

I ESCAPE FROM ROBONGO'S KRAAL.

Strict surveillance—Insulting message to the chief—A warlike reply—Robongo's war dance—Preparations for war—Plans for escape—An ostrich hunting party—A featherless quest—Another hunt—I bring down an ostrich—We give our party the slip—A hasty flight—Terrible hardships—I kill an ox—Water at last—The mad ox—Friendly natives—Rescued—We reach Khama's village.

BY this time I was beginning to understand the natives fairly well, and they also commenced to trust me, and often came to me for assistance and advice, and I accordingly made my influence felt in the councils of the chief. But still there seemed to be a feeling that I would one day try to leave them, and my wishes in this respect I did not attempt to conceal; consequently, although I was not absolutely debarred from making occasional hunting trips, these were always subjected to a certain amount of supervision. The principal excuse for this was that there was another powerful tribe whose town, I made out according to their calculation, was fourteen suns distant, who had expressed the desire of obtaining the white man whom they knew of as being with Robongo's people; and in effect, a messenger arrived one day from this distant

tribe, inviting our chief to visit them, with the special request that the white man, whom they had by some means heard of, should accompany him. The messenger was accompanied by a number of other men, altogether about nine, who were of the same type of native as the tribe which detained me.

Our council was quickly called together, and a meeting held with a view to considering what answer to send. I was greatly surprised at the tone of the arguments advanced by some of the older councillors, who explained that in the old days a dispute had arisen with this tribe over some boundary question or other which was unsettled to this day. Several wars had been fought in consequence, and sometimes they would press our men to within the walls of the town, and at other times Robongo's men had treated their opponents in similar manner. But no fights had taken place for the last eighteen months, or, in the native way of counting, eighteen moons. However, it was the general opinion of the council that treachery was intended by our former opponents in the invitation which they had made.

After about three hours' deliberation it was decided that we should not visit them, making the excuse that Robongo, the chief, was getting too old, and could not now undertake the journey. But while refusing their invitation, we at the same time sent them an invitation to visit us, and this having been conveyed to the messengers they were sent away.

They did not remain away very long, however, but returned with the insulting answer, that, as we had been afraid to come to them, their messengers were to take back ten head of cattle from us, if we wished to remain on friendly terms with them.

This message was received with great indignation by the chief, and for reply he took one of the messenger's spears, and splitting it down the centre, handed it back to him, and bade him and his companions depart to their tribe, and let him see their faces no more. The native custom of splitting the opposite party's spear and then returning it is a direct challenge to fight, and it will therefore be seen that our chief's message was of grave import.

When the news of the challenge became known throughout the town there was great excitement, especially among the young bloods, and in a few hours a great war-dance was in progress, and this, to me, was a very imposing sight. The warriors of our tribe numbered between two and three thousand, and with their spears, bows and arrows, shields, assegais, and knobkerries, not forgetting their war-paint, they made quite an impressive spectacle.

They were divided into regiments of about eight hundred each, and it was wonderful to see a number of such apparently harmless natives in a few hours turn themselves into wild savages. Their drill was as perfect as if they had been exercising daily. The chief ordered that five oxen should be killed that night, and they were roasted before enormous fires. The women were the musicians, beating tom-toms, blowing horns, and keeping wonderful time to the dancing of the warriors.

I hardly knew the chief himself that night, for, having donned his war-dress, he had changed from an old man into a vigorous and ferocious-looking savage, like his subjects. Lucas and myself looked so much out of place that we also got some ostrich feathers and other native adornments from Giba, and joined in the dancing. By a certain way in which the ostrich

feathers were placed on their heads the nobility, that is the chief's family and councillors, could be distinguished. As the women mostly dressed the men on this occasion, I had the honour of a request from the chief's daughter to caparison me, which was no easy matter, as my hair was very long, and would not mat together, like the woolly crop on the native pate. We had no mirrors, so I cannot give my readers any idea of how your humble servant appeared, but I daresay I was not a very imposing creature to look upon.

The dancing was kept up until the sun rose the following day, when scouts were placed in commanding positions on the outskirts of the town. However, two weeks passed and no war tidings came, although there were many rumours in the town that our challenge had been accepted. Lucas, like myself, began to feel the monotony of our existence, and we yearned more than ever for freedom. One night, after every one was asleep, we adjourned to a solitary hut, and there began to devise plans for escape. Lucas declared that he would rather commit suicide than stay with these people longer. All the time, of course, we had not been idle, and we had done all we possibly could to try and find out our whereabouts geographically, but without success, as we had no one in whom we could trust. I had often attempted to sound Giba and some of the councillors as to whether the Great River was anywhere near, and on which side it lay, as I had an idea we must be somewhere near the Zambesi. But whether we were in the vicinity of that mighty stream, or nearer the east or the west coast, I could not find out. Close by the town was a small

stream, but that was our only guide, and now the value of a compass thoroughly impressed me. Still, it was no use getting down-hearted, and I consoled Lucas with the remark that we would have to wait our chance on one of our hunting expeditions, although I had no idea in what direction we should go in the event of any such chance coming our way.

As Lucas by this time could speak the local dialect perfectly, he frequently overheard conversations, and reported them to me. On one occasion he gathered that it was the intention of the chief to make war upon the neighbouring tribe at the next new moon, which was about twenty days later, and that we were to go with the force, as the chief was sure of success owing to our possessing guns. Lucas went on to explain to me that if our tribe did not meet with success we should be made to suffer at their hands, as they and the chief had an absolute belief in the powers of our rifles. On the other hand, if taken prisoners by the opposing tribe we should probably be made to suffer terrible tortures; in fact, would most likely be put to death in some horrible manner peculiar to these savages. I was well aware that once these natives had tasted blood they would be changed from their present apparent peacefulness into fiends in human form. From that time we set our minds entirely towards one object, the regaining of our liberty.

It is a strange fact that the same thing that brought us away from our camp months before, and placed us in our present predicament, was now possibly to be the means of our escape. It suffices to remind my readers that my desire for ostrich hunting was the original cause of our being led

away from camp and losing ourselves in the forest, and the very same sport was now to give us a chance of regaining our liberty, with what result will be seen.

The following day, while the council was sitting, I mentioned to the chief that I thought we should get a fresh supply of ostrich feathers before commencing the war, and, I explained that by having a good supply of ostrich feathers to adorn the heads of the warriors we were bound to add greatly to our martial appearance and therefore to our chances of gaining the day. I knew that the old man's stock of feathers was limited, and it did not take much persuasion to get his consent for a party of us to go in search of our quarry. It was noised through the town that the fleetest oxen and very best hunters were needed by the chief, and from a body of three hundred men Giba picked one hundred, who were known to him personally as being expert hunters.

We were indeed a strong party as we set forth. Lucas and myself each rode an ox, which were the fleetest animals obtainable in the town. Under the guidance of one of the oldest hunters, we set off towards the east, and not, as I had anticipated towards the south. We passed through some of the most beautiful parts of Africa I had ever seen, and I conjectured therefore we were not far from the Zambesi, but although, when encamped at night, we questioned some of the natives as to the whereabouts of the Great River, none of them seemed to know, or at any rate they pretended not to know.

We saw any amount of game—wildebeeste, sable antelope, giraffe, quagga, and others, but were

not allowed to shoot, with the exception of an odd one here and there for food.

We must have travelled more than a hundred miles, but still not an ostrich nor the spoor of one could be seen anywhere, neither did we come across any natives.

We turned towards the south on our way back to the village, but a chance of escaping did not present itself, as we were too well guarded. It was therefore with heavy hearts that we returned to the village.

The chief was very angry when he heard we had no ostrich feathers, and although he made no reference to us as being the cause of the bad luck, we could see, by his manner, that we were no longer altogether in his favour. In defence, I told him that if he would allow us to go with only five men we would bring back the coveted plumes. We argued on this point for hours. I pointed out to him that it was only owing to such a large number going out to hunt that we did not see an ostrich, which was by nature a very timid bird, and that it was necessary for the hunt to be conducted in as quiet a manner as possible in order to meet with success.

However, I made but little impression on the chief, but that night, when Giba came to my hut, as on most evenings he did, I used the same arguments with him, and with better success. In fact, I made him promise to use all his influence to get his father to agree to my proposal. I could very plainly see that Giba at first thought I was making some plan or other, but I eventually managed to impress upon him that I was very eager to help his people to "eat up" this impudent tribe, who, as I said, would soon be our dogs, while their cattle

would be in our kraal, and their women our wives. But without these feathers, I told him, the Spirit would not favour us.

I argued with him until late that evening, and he, in turn, argued with his father, commencing from the next morning until midday. He then returned to my hut, where I had been waiting for him, and told me the result, which was, that his father had agreed that we should try another direction, but that not less than seventeen men should accompany us, together with Giba himself.

My hopes fell on hearing this decision, but I was afraid to press the point too much, as they would suspect that we were plotting to escape. So in a few words I explained that I refused to go with so many men, and that unless the chief agreed that ten men only should accompany us, we would shortly become the servants of our enemies.

This was a bold stroke, but I was desperate, and had therefore to play a desperate game. The native acts very, very slowly, and the chief, after receiving my message, did not answer it for more than two days. The suspense in the meantime was almost unbearable. I did not know whether we should be brought out and killed for insulting the chief, or what was going to happen. No councils were held in the meantime, but the expectant stare on the faces of the natives we met seemed to indicate that there was something pending, and, as I have said, the suspense was becoming intolerable.

Weeks before I had carefully packed away a good supply of biltong, and our ammunition, which was very low, we had stored up. It amounted to only seven cartridges for my Colt rifle. Lucas's Martini was of no use, as all his ammunition was gone. All

he had was the old musket, which I had managed to repair, and about four charges of powder. He had no bullets, but some small pieces of iron. This, in brief, was the extent of our battery. We also had a short dagger each. Our European clothes had long ago disappeared, and what we had on were made from the skins of animals, and consisted of breeches and jacket. Boots we had none, and as a covering for the feet we made use of a piece of Kudu skin, fitting it when in a half-dried condition on our feet and legs. Our hats were made of dried grass, plaited together. Lucas's hair was very long, though being curly, it did not trouble him, but mine hung down on my shoulders. The chief would not allow me to cut it, saying that by so doing I should bring bad luck on the whole of his tribe, as his subjects never cut their hair.

My suspense while waiting for the chief's answer came to an end on the third day after I had sent him my message. His reply was that he agreed to my proposal, and that we should start on the morrow, as the time for advancing against the enemy was getting near. Our party consisted of seven of the best hunters the chief possessed, his son, and our two selves, and we rode the very pick of his cattle. With Giba as our guide, we started off by some roundabout footpath long before dawn, and when the day broke we must have been a good ten miles from the town. I found I had lost my bearings altogether, for on asking Giba in what direction the town lay from where we stood, he pointed in an altogether opposite direction to what I had supposed. When I asked Lucas the same question, he, strange to say, pointed in the same direction as I had previously believed to be right. The incident passed

without further comment, but was well noted by Lucas and myself.

After travelling the whole day through what to us, at any rate, was strange country, we encamped for the night at the foot of a small hill. This hill presented rather a familiar appearance to me, and on asking Lucas whether he recognised the place, he replied, "Yes. It is the place where we went out hunting on the very first day," and with a piece of stick he pointed out on the ground the direction we should have to take, viz., that towards the south. As we both spoke Dutch together, we were confident of not being understood by any of the natives, but we were forced to be very careful as to our actions. We were most carefully watched, that we knew, and it behoved us to be continually on our guard.

Although we were now in the district where ostriches were generally to be found, we did not get a sight of any, or of their spoor, and it was with heavy hearts that night that we laid ourselves down to rest in the cave which had been chosen as our temporary camp. The men expressed the opinion that the enemy had been there to hunt before us, but they were afraid of returning to the town for a second time without the coveted feathers. In this strain they talked on until daybreak.

The next morning we had firmly made up our minds to get as far away from the town as possible, and then make a dash for liberty. The opportunity I had been waiting for came while we were having an early breakfast, when, taking the bull by the horns, I spoke to the men somewhat in the following manner: "There are too many of us for a successful ostrich hunt. It would be far better if three of you were to remain here, leaving four to go with us to

another locality where ostriches are likely to be found." I then explained to them that we should separate in the bush, forming a half-circle, with a little distance between each man, and that Lucas and myself, with our guns, should be in the centre, and in this formation we should advance into the locality where ostriches were generally to be found. I thoroughly explained to them that I should on no account return to the town until we had procured some feathers, even though we might have to wait twenty suns. This, of course, entailed a lot of discussion, some being against my plan, while others were in favour of it. Giba was against me. He said that if we were away longer than ten suns even, his father would send three hundred men to look for us, and if we were found we should be all treated as prisoners, and would be considered as boys for not succeeding in getting the feathers, and then returning. I eventually agreed with Giba, saying we should not be longer than ten days away, and added that we should be considered as "boys" if we did not succeed in getting what we came for within that time. I further explained that, this being our fourth day, we had still two days to journey away from the town, making six days, and we could then easily return in the remaining four. The whole party eventually agreed that we should not be longer away than ten days, and also gave in to my first proposal, viz., that three of their number should stay at the cave, and that the rest of us should set off in the direction pointed out by Giba.

We therefore forthwith saddled our oxen and set off. We hoped to arrive on the border of the forest that night, which we did. The next morning we commenced hunting as at first arranged, and, as luck

would have it, I shot a splendid bird out of a troop of sixteen. I could have shot more, but that was not my plan. On hearing the report the men all came towards me, and were greatly astonished at seeing such a fine bird lying on the ground, and rejoiced that at last they would be able to take a quantity of feathers home. The bird, however, had not been killed immediately, and in her struggles we found that she had broken many of her best feathers.

The feathers were indeed the best I had ever seen, some of them being fully three feet long, and broad in proportion. It was very lucky for us that the bird was not killed at the first shot, for if a quantity of feathers had not been spoilt there would have been quite enough for the needs of the chief and his family. Therefore, after a consultation, we decided that we should again set off in the hope of securing a few of the remaining ostriches. This, I knew, meant a long run, as these birds, when once started, will go for miles, and the bush being thick we might have a good opportunity of escaping. Being in the centre of the half-circle, we should not have to advance into the forest until after the other men, who were on the flanks, and when they had gone about a mile into the forest, it was agreed between Lucas and myself that we should both immediately hastily retrace our steps, taking good care to go in an entirely opposite direction, which was due south.

The plan succeeded, and as we had kept our oxen in good condition we set off at a fast trot, which was well maintained, and it was with lighter hearts that we pushed on throughout that day, with the comforting knowledge that we had at last succeeded in escaping our captors, and had once more regained

our liberty. Had we known at that time what troubles were yet in store for us we might not have been so jubilant. But I will not anticipate.

We did not attempt to hide ourselves by entering large patches of forest, as we knew we should not be missed for a good many hours, and as our direction lay in fairly open ground we made excellent progress, until by nightfall we must have covered a distance of about fifty miles. By this time we had reached a fairly fertile country, well covered with bush. We did not encamp, however, and although we knew the risk we were running in travelling by night, in the way of meeting wild animals, we decided to push on all through the night, as every minute we were getting further and further away from the natives who, by this time, would be our pursuers. We took good care of our oxen by stopping every couple of hours, and resting them for about ten minutes each time, but by daybreak the following morning they began to show signs of exhaustion. However, we did not stop, and through the whole of that day pushed on.

At one time we traversed for fully six hours a plateau, which was nearly destitute of bush of any description. Our fears increased greatly while crossing this plateau; for it seemed as if we would never get to the bush which we could see ahead, and while we were on the flat our chances of being discovered were very great. We therefore urged our tired animals on to their very utmost, and it was with thankfulness that we at last entered the forest on the other side, as both ourselves and our cattle were now very exhausted, having travelled almost incessantly for two whole days and a night.

We had with us only two small calabashes of water and some biltong. It was a pitiful sight to see the oxen, with their tongues hanging out and their eyes all bloodshot. It was now nearly sunset, and although the thick forest in front of us looked very uninviting, our safety depended upon pushing through it that night.

By good fortune the moon was nearly full, otherwise we should certainly have been lost. Our oxen were too tired to eat, so we fed them with grass as they were lying down. The poor animals were also very footsore, as they had not been used to travelling so continuously. As the night was approaching, we should have liked to have made a fire, but under the circumstances this was not to be thought of; therefore, after resting for about three hours, we continued our journey, and wended our way through the thick forest, trusting always to Providence to keep any wild animals from crossing our path. We led our oxen, with the intention of giving them a rest until the morning. This was now the third day of our escape.

We mounted our oxen at daybreak, but the poor animals could only go at a walking pace, and fears of being overtaken by the fleet-footed natives again entered our minds, although we both refrained from discussing the situation. However, by dint of coaxing our poor animals, we managed to get them into a trot, and after some time, the ground began gradually to slope away from us. It was with difficulty, owing to the very thick bush, that we managed, in zigzag fashion, to reach the bottom of the incline, which, to our disgust, we found to be merely the dry bed of a stream, and although

we searched up and down for fully an hour we could find no trace of water. However, in order to prove whether there was any water in the vicinity or not, we gave our oxen free rein, as we knew that if water was to be found within a reasonable distance the animals would, by instinct, make straight for the spot. Now, however, they stood stock still, and would not move a muscle. We did not waste any time, and leading them by the head, made our way up the opposite slope. This incline must have been fully three miles long, as it took us until the evening to reach the top. Here we had again to sleep in the open without fire.

However, I shall not trouble my readers with many more details of this terrible journey. They are true in every point, but I can hardly expect the reader to have more than a faint idea of what our hardships were really like ; moreover, description of the whole of the journey would be, I am afraid, rather monotonous reading. Therefore I will just give a few of the principal incidents which occurred from the time of which I am speaking until the end of our journey. The reader will understand that although we had our guns and an antelope was to be occasionally seen we were afraid to fire, as our pursuers might be somewhere in the vicinity. On the other hand, again, we were practically starving. We had tightened our belts to such an extent that our waists could not have spanned more than about twenty inches at the most, doing this, of course, in order to withstand the pangs of hunger as long as possible.

That night we were too tired and weak to go any further, and our oxen were also completely done for, especially the one Lucas was riding, he being

a heavier man than myself; in fact, the following morning the poor animal refused to rise, in spite of all our efforts in the way of coaxing and goading. We were now in a serious predicament. If we left the animal behind, it would enable our pursuers to find us, as in a few hours the vultures would be hovering over the spot, which would attract attention for miles. This simple fact is, of course, well known to all South Africans. However, there was nothing else to be done but kill the animal, and so save our lives, for the time being at any rate.

This done, we drank its blood, which seemed to put new courage into us. My ox had still some vestige of life left in him; in fact he could walk a little, and so we each lightened our burden by loading him with our guns, and other odds and ends which we had about our persons.

The country through which we were now passing was very flat; not a hill could be seen anywhere, and there being but scant bush we got no shelter from the fierce rays of the sun. The grass was also parched and our rough shoes began to be of great trouble to us, owing to the hide of which they were composed becoming loose, and both of us were very footsore. Nevertheless we trudged along in this manner until nearly sundown; but our spirits, as can be imagined, were at very low ebb, and for my part I scarcely cared whether the natives overtook us or whether we died where we were.

Our breakfast that morning had consisted of the blood of the ox, which made us now both feel very ill. Lucas left me sleeping under the bush and went off towards a small clearing to our left, and he afterwards told me that he sat there until sundown. Just as the sun went down he returned

to where I was lying, and with a cry of joy held up before me an animal which very much resembled a weasel. It was still alive, but Lucas, with his knife, severed the head from the body, and commenced skinning it before it was cold. Seeing it was meant for food, I set about making a fire—our very first fire since we had escaped from the native hunters.

It may seem to the reader that this day we twice acted in a rather careless manner; first in leaving the ox, which might betray our neighbourhood, and secondly in lighting a fire, which might be the very means of pointing us out. This is true, but we could resist our hunger no longer, and, come what might, we cooked that weasel, or, I might say, warmed it. We were in desperate straits, and could not wait for the animal to be properly cooked, and the repast, disgusting as it may appear to my readers, made new men of two physical wrecks.

We slept that night at our camp fire until the next morning; this was the first good night's rest we had had for three days and nights, and we awoke quite refreshed. We were still suffering considerably from thirst, having had nothing to drink, but we nevertheless set out towards the southward with lighter hearts.

We suffered terribly from thirst all throughout that day, but still kept on; and it was well we did so, for as good luck, or otherwise, would have it, we came upon a dry river-bed, the banks of which were so steep that we had some difficulty in getting down to it. We eventually managed to reach the bed as did our remaining ox, which, in fact, tumbled from the top to the bottom. We had previously taken the precaution to disengage our

packs from the animal, so no damage was done, with the exception of our poor friend receiving a few bruises as the results of his clumsiness. It was a long time before he could gather himself together, but eventually we got him on his feet, and to our surprise he led the way straight towards the opposite bank and there commenced pawing the sand. We needed no telling as to what the action of the ox meant, and as we were practically perishing of thirst we commenced digging with our hands. The poor beast seemed to recognise that we were helping him, and aided us to dig with his hoofs. We cried aloud with joy as we scooped up the sand, for after being at first hot, the ground grew cold, then clammy, and about two feet down we came upon the precious fluid. Although brackish, we did not notice it at the time but drank down a few mouthfuls. At that moment it seemed as if the savage nature of the ox in primeval times had returned to our poor friend, for with a loud bellow he commenced poking at us with his horns; and try as we would to quiet him he became unmanageable, and putting his head down into the bottom of the hole we had dug, he remained motionless, after having got us out of the way by his savage attacks. We therefore decided to dig another hole a few yards away, and got water at the same depth, but no sooner had we commenced drinking than the ox again turned towards us, and recommenced his savage attacks. We eventually tied him to the root of a tree which the water of the river had laid bare. If we had not done this we should have had to shoot him in order to save ourselves, as he kept up his mad performances. Although the past few days had made us practically

savages, we had still sense enough not to drink too much; but our thirst seemed unquenchable, and with terrible effort we managed to restrain ourselves, taking a mouthful now and again.

The ox now began to trouble us again by breaking loose, bellowing more wildly than ever, and he had decidedly taken a turn which promised to end in his becoming absolutely mad. His eyes were like two balls of fire, his tongue was hanging out of his mouth, and with nostrils extended he looked a truly ferocious animal. Therefore, in order to save him from doing further mischief, we shot him.

We should have liked to have stayed where we were that night, but under the circumstances dare not, as the carcase of the ox would probably bring lions upon the scene. In any case, wild dogs and jackals we felt sure would be there in a few hours, the power of scent possessed by these animals being wonderful.

We therefore lost no time in filling our calabashes with water, and, although it was now dark, hurried from the scene, and, clambering up the embankment, made our way into the bush, and continued our journey for about two hours further. In this manner we kept travelling day after day, getting water on two occasions from the Baobab trees. Altogether we marched in this manner ten days, and on the tenth day at nearly sundown, we found a small track such as is often made by roving cattle, which we hailed with delight. As the angel appeared to Elijah, so did this cattle track appear to us. The hope of seeing a human being again, no matter of what colour, gave us new life, and we decided to walk all through the night, as far as our strength would allow us.

We had been shuffling along until midnight, when

we were both alarmed and glad at the same instant, to see right ahead of us not more than thirty paces distant, a small fire. Our excitement was intense, as we knew not whether we should meet friends or foes, or whether we had by some unlucky chance come upon the camp of our pursuers, who had perhaps got ahead of us. This we thought by no means impossible, and so, as can be imagined, our nervousness was intense.

We decided to shoot the party as they lay round the fire, should they prove to be Robongo's men. But how were we to know was the next problem which presented itself, and how many were there? After a few seconds we regained our scattered senses, and decided upon strong measures. With our guns loaded and at the ready we separated at a distance of about four yards apart, and walked boldly towards the fire. The natives, for such they proved to be, were all fast asleep until we came within three paces of the fire, when one of them awoke, and giving a shout roused the others, who scrambled to their feet, and casting a hurried glance at us, scampered off into the bush. They had evidently received a great fright, as they left their spears and everything behind them. They had also left the skins with which they covered themselves, having cleared into the bush in an absolutely naked condition. We saw at once that these were not Robongo's men, neither were they bushmen, and, if my judgment proved correct, they were of some Bechuana tribe. While I stood guard, I told Lucas to make a big fire, there being plenty of dry wood handy, and in a few moments we had a grand blaze, which lit up the forest all round for a good many yards. We gathered together the weapons the natives left behind, which consisted of assegais,

four bows and arrows, and some throwing sticks, so that if there were only the four of them, they could do us no harm. It may have seemed foolish on our part, perhaps, to have made a big fire, as we should be good targets should there happen to be other natives in the vicinity, but this did not strike me until afterwards, my idea in making the blaze being to show the natives that we were not enemies but friends, and that we did not want them to clear away into the bush. I naturally concluded that, seeing the big fire, they would return to discover the cause. The fire proved the magnet I intended it should be, and the natives returned, but did not show themselves. I then told Lucas to speak first in the Bechuana tongue the following words:—

“If you are the people of Sibeles or of Khama, or belong to one of the Bechuana tribes, you are my friends. I cannot see you, but I know you are listening to these words. If I had been your enemy I should have killed you all. I belong to the great White Nation, and am a white man. We are lost. Return to your camp, I pray you, and have no fear, and I will prove that we mean no harm.”

I waited a few moments, and then Lucas shouted out again the same words in the Makalaka tongue, but still no reply came. Lucas next repeated the words in the Bechuana tongue, and also said that our guns were lying on the ground. At the same time I laid my gun at my feet, and lifted my hands up so that they could see I was unarmed, Lucas doing likewise. We called upon them to come forward, and eventually one of them appeared, but for a long time he would not come closer than about twelve paces. I did not understand what the conversation was, but left that part to Lucas. It lasted

about a quarter of an hour, when the native gave a shout and uttered some words, upon which the other three appeared. They gradually came closer as the conversation between Lucas and the first native proceeded, until at last they all seemed to gain confidence at one moment, and stepped forward to the fire. As they did so they cast their eyes about looking for their arms, and seemed satisfied when they discovered them all together in a heap where Lucas had placed them. Lucas then told me that these were some of Khama's men in charge of a cattle post, to which I replied that that being so they were all my friends, as Khama was also my friend. And with this assurance the first native came forward and stretched out his hand, and we shook hands heartily. In order to give the other natives confidence, I stretched out my hand to them in turn, and, in a timid manner, they responded. That they had not yet got over their fright was very evident; the poor fellows' eyes had still that wild look about them which is so characteristic of the black man, and their mouths were wide open.

Although we were very tired, our conversation with these natives did not cease until daybreak. When they found out that we were really friends, and meant them no harm, but were genuine travellers in distress, they gave us their skins, which they had used as blankets, and asked us to rest, saying that they would guard over us. This suggestion we were not loth to take advantage of, for we were prostrated by fatigue, and it was a question if either of us could have gone further. It was only this chance meeting that saved us from perishing miserably.

When I awoke the following morning the sun was well up in the heavens, and our newly-made

friends had ready a nice piece of cooked venison, and a bowl of thick milk, which they placed before us. Our altered position did not strike me so much until our hunger and thirst were somewhat satisfied, for the very fact of being with friendly natives had obliterated from my mind the fear of being overtaken by our pursuers, who might by this time be close upon our track. The horrible thought of being again captured put fresh life into us, and we therefore bargained with the natives in charge of the cattle post to let us have the loan of two riding oxen, as it was impossible for us to think of proceeding any further on foot without a long rest, being still a long way from Khama's town; and although within his territory, we certainly could not think of staying at this distant station. The natives told us in reply that we should have to pass four of these cattle posts before reaching Palachwe, the capital of Khama's country. We eventually came to an agreement with the head man in charge, by which he consented to let us have two riding oxen; and at each cattle post we were to get fresh beasts, as he would send one of his men with us to tell those in charge of the next station, who would again send us on with a guide, and so on. For this service we agreed to give the man the musket. Strange to say, it was the very same musket we were now going to give the man which, it will be remembered, got us into trouble in the first instance. That same musket was about to be handed to a native in return for showing us the way out of our trouble.

Giving the man the musket we now re-commenced our journey with as little delay as possible, and our oxen being quite fresh, they trotted along

quite splendidly, the native riding ahead and showing us the way. No incident worth relating happened along the road between the outpost and Palachwe, with the exception that, on our arrival at the outposts, it took our guide in each case nearly an hour to explain the circumstances. At one place we had to take possession of the cattle almost by force, owing to the natives thinking we were some kind of raiders. But nothing worth relating happened, as I have said, and we managed to get through all right, arriving two days afterwards at Palachwe, having travelled two days and one night on ox-back, with only an hour or two's rest in between.

Reaching Palachwe, I made my way straight to Khama's hut, both Lucas and myself receiving many questioning looks from the natives on our way through the town. I had known Khama for some years, but at first he did not seem to recognise me as I met him sitting outside his hut. Only a little explanation, however, was necessary, and in a very short space of time I was shown into the chief's hut, and for the first time for months saw my own visage as the chief handed me a looking-glass.

It would be almost impossible for me to attempt to describe the extraordinary state of our habiliments. Our rude foot and leg gear were nearly worn out; our trousers and jackets, also made of skin, were torn in many places, showing our bare skin, for shirts and under things had been worn out and vanished months ago. My hair hung on my shoulders and my beard ran wild. Khama's son, Sekhome, kindly lent me some clothes, and although too large, they were very acceptable.

That evening I told Khama the whole story, from the time I had left his town until the present moment. He took great interest in the country from which I had then come, and the class of natives there, who, he thought, were a branch of the Matabele nation. He most kindly placed at my disposal one of his travelling wagons and oxen. These I very gladly took advantage of, and the next morning Lucas and myself commenced our journey towards Macloutsie with the intention of there procuring a wagon for Pretoria, duly reaching our destination without any incident worth relating.

CHAPTER XIV

WITH THE BECHUANALAND BORDER POLICE

I reach Macloutsie—Returned from the dead—My brother's joy—
I join the Border Police—The Matabele War—Trouble with
Chief Linchwe—The chief and the field-gun—Sir Sidney
Shippard—An outbreak averted—I leave the police—Arrival
at Johannesburg—Native refugees—A terrible tale.

MACLOUTSIE then consisted of a large military camp, composed of the British Bechuanaland Police, and as there was some unrest among the Matabele, there was a fairly large force in readiness, and Macloutsie was made the base of operations. The station included four stores and a few private houses. All wagons going up to Mashonaland passed through the village, and were subjected to a search before being allowed to go further north. The outspanning was always carefully watched by a patrol from the camp, and on any fresh wagons coming into the village the police were very soon in evidence to search them, as it was reported that the Matabele managed to get guns and ammunition in some mysterious manner unknown to the authorities.

It was early in the morning, and we were making coffee, when we noticed three men in police uniform coming towards us. I recognised the features of one, but restrained myself, and waited to see if I too



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should be recognised. Without speaking, they jumped on to the after part of the wagon, and, seeing it was empty, walked towards the fore part, throwing aside the sail which formed the tent. This revealed the two guns belonging to Lucas and myself. On seeing the weapons, the features of the youngest policeman became ghastly white, as he evidently recognised the rifle hanging uppermost. He then turned to his companions and remarked that that was his brother's rifle, pointing to the carving on the butt, which, he said, he had himself done some two years previously. Then turning to us, who were watching their movements, he shouted out in an excited manner, "Where does this rifle come from?"

I saw I was not recognised, for I had not yet spoken, and it was hardly likely that my brother would recognise me in the clothes I wore, as I had stitched up my costume of skins, and cast aside the garments so kindly lent me by Khama's son. Lucas being the nearest man to the wagon, the young fellow sprang to the ground, and taking hold of his shoulder pulled him from his seat in his excitement, demanding in a very excited tone—

"Where did you get that rifle?"

I could not stand the strain any longer, and, standing up, I said, "My brother, do you not know me?" He looked me straight in the eyes for a second, and then emotion was too great for both of us, and we fell into each others' arms. I hardly know what happened afterwards, the joy of meeting was so great, but when I came to myself I was in the officers' room, surrounded by a group of eager young fellows, who plied me with questions more quickly than I could answer them. I was eventually led by my brother to his own quarters a little dis-

tance away, where in a few hours I changed from a wild man of the woods into the uniform of a Bechuanaland Border Policeman. Lucas, too, was not forgotten; he was also well clothed, and a few days afterwards was sent on to his home in Kimberley.

It took me a week before I could fully realise that I was again among civilised beings, and my wonderful experiences of the last few months could hardly be credited by our numerous friends at the camp. It appeared that my brother had waited and waited at the camp on the banks of the Shashi River, and searched the whole countryside, but had heard nothing of my whereabouts. About two weeks after I had left a native came into the camp, saying that he had heard that two white men had been killed by lions, also their cattle, and my brother naturally believed that these two must have been none other than Lucas and myself. He then lost no time, and decided to return home, but having got as far as Macloutsie, he, on second thoughts, decided to sell his whole hunting outfit and join the police force. The idea of going home without me preyed upon his mind, and he therefore decided to take this chance, and see some service with the famous Bechuanaland Border Police. My original intention was to have gone on from Macloustie to either Johannesburg or Pretoria, but I now decided to join the corps with my brother.

A few months afterwards the Matabele War broke out, but as this struggle has been fully described in other works, I think it is hardly necessary to attempt to deal with it myself. My brother and I were together the whole of the time, and when all was over, after a rest at this very same

place, Macloutsie, we were transferred to Gaberones, which change we welcomed with delight. We escorted some wagon loads of ammunition that were being transferred to the new camp, and, with the exception of one exciting incident, delivered our precious cargo quite safely. The incident I refer to was that when approaching a place near Selika we were caught in a bush fire, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we managed to span in the oxen and push the wagon into the middle of the road out of reach of the flames. It was night-time when the fire occurred, and the oxen were outspanned by the side of the road, and surrounded by bush. The wind being strong, it will be seen that with our wagons loaded with ammunition we were in a dangerous fix, enveloped as we were on both sides by walls of fire. In fact, more than once the flames were actually under our wagons, and it was only with the greatest difficulty we managed to prevent them catching fire. However, by dint of hard work we succeeded in preserving all three from destruction.

We were told that Khama's brother was formerly in possession of this part of the country, but, owing to his persistence in continuing to brew Kaffir beer, he was driven, as the reader may remember, to the desert-like place where he now was. It is not necessary to go into details of camp life at Gaberones. We were commanded by good officers, and, taking one thing with another, we formed a jolly party. The camp was well chosen, as regards the health of the troops, and from a military point of view was so situated as to prevent any war arising between the different Bechuanaland tribes. It was also within a few miles of the Transvaal border.

Chief Linchwe, whose principal town is Mochudi, nearly brought us into conflict with his men, on one occasion especially, which I think worth recording here. In return to the Government for maintaining order throughout the country, Linchwe was supposed to pay a certain number of cattle annually, which on this occasion he was very loth to do, for some unaccountable reason. To compel this gentleman to bow to British authority, a patrol of our men, numbering about thirty, with one seven-pounder, was despatched against him, and three days afterwards we encamped on the hill overlooking his village. A message was sent to the chief requesting the immediate payment of the cattle, together with a fine, to which he replied in an insolent manner that, as he was king of his own territory, he would not comply with the request. The officer in charge of our detachment gave him three hours to consider matters, and on receipt of this message, Linchwe himself came to our camp. On arrival, he impudently inquired the reason of such a message, and pooh-poohed the idea of a mere handful of men like us attempting to enforce our demand. He was then shown the seven-pounder, which had been put into position, upon which, indicating a hut which was situated at a little distance from the village and was about one thousand yards from where we were, he requested the officer to illustrate the power of the shell by firing at the hut. Seeing that it was occupied by natives, we pointed this out to him, to which he replied: "That does not matter. It does not concern you. These people are my people, and I can do with them as I choose."

The colonel, however, aimed the gun at a huge

mimosa tree a little further away, remarking that he would illustrate the power of the cannon upon that instead of upon the hut, as he did not wish to take innocent peoples' lives. The chief laughed at the officer's humanity, and the officer then ordered us to load the seven-pounder with a shell, and told the gunner to take careful aim and fire at the tree. A few seconds later, all that was left of it was just the stump and a few scattered branches. Turning to the chief, the officer asked him if he was satisfied, but Linchwe replied, "No, I am not."

"Very well then," said the colonel, "I will now give you two hours to bring forth the cattle, and failing that, I shall put my horses and men inside of that church," pointing to a corrugated iron structure, which had been built in the centre of the village, "and from there I shall turn the cannon upon you and your people."

Having said this to the chief, he gave us orders to get ready for action, and sent Linchwe away. On leaving our camp, the chief cast a dubious look towards the little body of men preparing for action, and then made off. This was an exciting time for us, and we fully expected to "have some fun," but we were doomed to disappointment, as, just within a few minutes of the expiration of the time of grace, a straggling line of cattle could be seen wending its way towards us. The oxen numbered about eighty head, and were a most miserable lot, some being lame, and the majority very lean. However, the Government's demands had been complied with, and as long as the contribution was correct in point of numbers it mattered not whether the cattle were fat or lean.

A short time after this affair news came to camp to the effect that there had been a fight between some of Linchwe's and Khama's men over a border question, and that unless the Government acted quickly two great tribes would shortly be at war. The Administrator, Sir Sidney Shippard, came up from Vryburg to settle the dispute, and about thirty men, among the number myself, again visited Mochudi. The place of meeting for the two chiefs was at a given point, some sixty miles from Mochudi, named Laghloes Pool, situated on the Notwani River. It was with some difficulty that we located the spot, but I chanced to remember an incident which happened to us when on our journey up country, and which enabled the officer in charge to find the place.

We now prepared the ground for the meeting, and chose a good position on the top of a rise overlooking the river, where we could dominate the two tribes, and so prevent them from coming into conflict with one another. During the negotiations, which lasted about five days, Khama was accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Willoughby as his chief adviser. At one time the outlook between the two tribes was very threatening, and it seemed as if hostilities would commence there and then, in spite of the Administrator, Sir Sidney Shippard, being in our camp. However, through his ability and tact, this was happily avoided, and goodwill was once more established between the two chiefs.

I merely mention these incidents of police life in Bechuanaland so that the British public may at a glance see that unless the Government places men in authority who understand their duties as administrators, and will act promptly, and employ a force

of police who know the country, the natives, and their peculiar customs, it needs but very little to set the whole of a vast territory ablaze from one end to the other.

After a further stay of a few weeks at Gaberones, we welcomed the news of our removal to Mafeking, which town we reached in due course without any incident worth relating. As I have already described the town and camp at Mafeking, it is needless to detail anything further at this juncture; suffice it to say that it had progressed enormously since I was last there, and the railway having been completed, business and bustle were the order of the day.

As an expedition was being organised to go towards Lake Ngami, my brother decided to join it, while I myself, having seen enough of the Kalahari for a time at least, bade farewell to my brother at Mafeking, and departed for Johannesburg. On my arrival in the Golden City, I found there were plenty of chances to commence business, especially for young men like myself who were not afraid of work. The business upon which I engaged was my old one of dealing in live stock of every description. My duties brought me much among the burghers of the Transvaal, with many of whom I became very well acquainted. As the city was going ahead by leaps and bounds, large quantities of stock were required; thus my business at times took me as far away as the Orange Free State, and even to Cape Colony, in order to buy up large supplies of cattle, sheep, and goats.

One day, while I was standing in a shop in Johannesburg I was more than surprised to see among the crowd of customers the face of a native whom I thought I recognised. Our eyes met, and

the native sprang forward, exclaiming in his own tongue, "My master, I have found you!"

It was a long time before I could recollect where we had met, but I found out he was one of the men belonging to the ostrich hunting party sent from Robongo's kraal in far-away Central Africa. Our mutual surprise can be imagined, and some explanation was absolutely necessary. The business I was then engaged upon was at once cast aside, and I beckoned to the man to follow me into one of our offices, and bade him tell me how he came to be on the goldfields.

It was now some six years since I had left Robongo's kraal, and naturally both the native and myself had changed considerably during that time. Even now I could hardly believe my eyes until the poor fellow began to tell me his pitiful story. The reader will remember it was while hunting ostriches that Lucas and I escaped, and this man was one of the hunters. They missed us very shortly afterwards, but the idea of our escaping had not entered their minds, and they thought we were somewhere in the forest. They therefore searched in every direction for about two days, until one of them found our spoor, and, raising the alarm, they all joined in pursuit. They left their oxen behind them, preferring to travel after us on foot. The pursuing party consisted of seven men and Giba, but we had been too quick for them. They only followed our spoor during the daytime, and slept at night, and one night, while camping, they were attacked by lions, Giba and another man being carried off. They were afraid to follow us any further, and so returned to Robongo's kraal, taking the precaution, however, to halt about five miles

outside, and send one of their men in to tell the news to the chief, asking him for assistance. From their concealed position they saw a body of about fifty men carrying something on a spear, which, as they advanced, proved to be the head of their unfortunate companion who had been sent into town. Now, knowing the intentions of the tribe, they fled hastily, wandered for months southward, and finally, after many adventures, reached the goldfields.

It seems that the law of their nation is that should they be in charge of any prisoner—more especially an important one, as on this occasion—and allow him to escape, they, together with their wives and children, are killed and thrown to the hyænas, or crocodiles which infest the river close to the village. Their cattle are also killed and eaten, and everything they possess is appropriated by the rest of the tribe. I asked the native, whose name was Lobani, what means he had of telling that the wife and children of his companion had been murdered, and he replied:—

“Do I not know the native custom? The men who carried the head of our comrade were chanting the names of the women and children they intended to kill before the sun went down that day, and every one of us heard the names of our families.” Although nearly captured they managed to get away; and after undergoing all kinds of hardships they came to the very same road which Lucas and I had traversed, and were in great danger of being killed by some of Khama's men, who had captured them, and then taken them before Khama. The latter, however, on hearing their story, was confident they were not spies, and at once gave them permission to proceed through his country to the southward. Lobani said he would

return from whence he had come, and would tell his countrymen that the white man who had been with them in their far-off land had succeeded in escaping and was alive and well. Having made his purchase, he departed without another word, only to return the next day with his friends. They had, of course, entirely changed, and were, as will be supposed, now half-civilised. Although their European clothing was very unbecoming, still I recognised them, and they in return had not forgotten their custom of saluting, which took the form of kissing my feet, very much to the surprise and amusement of my friends who happened to be with me in the store at the time. The head of the firm gave orders that the five men were to be given employment as they had expressed their wish that they should work with "their little master," as they now called me.

After they had fairly settled down, I was very often to be found in their room after the day's work was over, listening to their many tales of adventure; and often these hard, rough warriors would become as softened in their hearts as children when they spoke of the fate that had befallen their wives and little ones. This was also, I admit, a sore point with me, as it was indirectly through me that the lives of so many innocent persons had been sacrificed. As may be supposed, I took a great interest in these men, and did all I could to make them comfortable.

I left Johannesburg about twelve months afterwards. During this period two of the natives died, and another was sent to one of our farms to look after our cattle. The other was placed in a comfortable position as stable-boy with one of my old friends, who I knew would look after him.



MR. S. B. JOEL.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE BOER LAAGER DURING THE JAMESON RAID

My cattle are commandeered—I am arrested—Insults of the Boers—My life is threatened—I meet an old friend—A foul murder—I escape from the laager—Surrender of Jameson—Excitement in Johannesburg—Graphic description of the fight—On the battlefield—I return to Johannesburg—The secret history of the raid—Who was the traitor?—Reflections.

THE exciting episode known as the Jameson Raid was now at hand, and the news of that escapade came with the suddenness and disastrous effect of a bolt from the blue. At that time I had a quantity of cattle and sheep on a farm close to Johannesburg. The Boer forces had mobilised so quickly that the whole country, on January 2, 1896, was practically honeycombed with laagers, and in order to save my cattle I rode out with the intention of bringing them in.

When I arrived at the farm I found that the cattle had been taken away, and the native who was in charge had been shot. A large number of sheep had also been taken by the Republican forces. The remainder, numbering some six hundred, I decided to drive into town, but had scarcely got more than five miles on the road when I was stopped by five

armed Boers, who informed me that as there was war in the country the stock would be commandeered as supplies for the forces. It did not matter, they added, so long as their field cornet and commandant gave me a receipt for them, and the person in charge wrote one out and handed it to me.

I then prepared to ride to Johannesburg, and had gone about a hundred yards, when I was called upon to stop, and knowing the Boers as I did, I did not attempt to run the gauntlet. I found that the commandant had changed his mind, and that I was to accompany him to the laager, and to consider myself a prisoner. He remarked that should I attempt to escape, I should be fired upon with ball-cartridge. With the assistance of the four Boers, therefore, I drove the sheep in the opposite direction, reaching the Boer laager that evening. The laager was posted about half-way between Pretoria and Johannesburg, as it was surmised that, should Jameson manage to reach Johannesburg, he would be there reinforced, and would pass this laager on his way to Pretoria.

I was taken before the commandant, whom I recognised as being an old friend of mine, and an influential farmer in the district. He spoke very gruffly to me, but I thought I could discern a kindly glance in the old man's eyes. Still, I knew that before his people he would have to act as if he were against me.

I was asked as to where I was born. Without much premeditation I replied, "At Bloemfontein," which, of course, was untrue. The commandant then said: "You being a Free Stater, your sympathy is with us, and you are therefore commanded to take a

rifle in defence of the country." As he uttered these words the crowd of onlookers turned their eyes towards me, and it was some few moments before I replied. My reply was that as I had no grievance I did not consider they had a right to force me to take up arms. This was an attitude fraught with danger, and, indeed, it had on more than one occasion of late cost a life; and the body of men that formed the laager seemed a very rough class of Boers. Some shouted, "Shoot him," but the commandant, holding up his hand, demanded silence, saying: "No. I give him until sunrise to-morrow morning to decide. In the meantime he must consider himself a prisoner." And without more ado he walked away, followed by some of his officers.

I was grabbed from behind, and told to march with my guards, who consisted of a crowd of roughs. They led the way towards one of the wagons, where a fire had been lit, and some of the flesh of my sheep was being cooked. I was shamefully insulted by this mob, who jeered at me unmercifully. One youngster, not more than fourteen, went so far as to put a cartridge into the breech of his rifle, saying that that was intended for me the following morning, perhaps even at the present instant if I was not very careful. As the weapon was pointed towards me with the lad's hand upon the trigger, it was a critical moment, and I protested. As I spoke their language fluently, I demanded of them what I had done, and finding that I was pressed upon all sides by numerous questions I was at first silent. When comparative quietude was restored, I argued that I had done nothing as yet, and that I might possibly decide on the morrow to take a rifle in

defence of the country and so be one of them, which seemed to satisfy them.

At that moment I noticed the huge form of the commandant coming towards the fire, and the men on hearing his voice made way for him. He did not, however, speak to me, but, on reaching the fire, ordered the roughs not to bother me, and further said that he had known me for years, and that I was to be respected while in their camp. Concluding, he said, "Are we not all at the present moment eating this man's meat?" Then turning to me he bade me good-night and departed.

Those who had insulted me a few minutes previously now spoke as if they had known me for years, and our talk presently turned upon farming, and other matters connected with the life of a farmer; in fact, I contrived always to turn the conversation away from the existing crisis. I should say the number of men in the laager was about 1,500. They had no field guns, but were all armed with the Martini-Henry rifle, and seemed to have plenty of ammunition. As the evening wore on, fires were lit all round the laager, and at these the Boers squatted, numbering from six to twelve at each fire. As it was a pitch-dark night, the scene was striking and impressive. Casting a glance over the camp, there seemed to be no one on guard, and hearty laughs could be heard here and there, as some coarse story was being told between the puffs of the inevitable pipe.

I was given a blanket and told to sleep under the wagon to which I had been brought by my guard. It was while lying there, thinking over some means of escape from my position, that I overheard a terrible story told at the fire on my left, which shows the

callous, sordid ferocity of the lower-class Boers. The speaker, a young Boer about eighteen years of age, was the roughest and most uncouth fellow I think I had ever met, while his hearers were of the same type as himself, and numbered about six or seven. I cannot give the story word for word, but it was to the effect that at a country store a few miles away was a young Englishman, who worked there as an assistant, and who had arrived from England some twelve months previously. He owned a black horse, which was envied by all the young Boers in the country round about, as, whenever races took place, which was pretty often, this horse seemed as if it could not be beaten, and thus became the cause of much jealousy. It was a very showy animal, and many of the young Boers had made offers to the young Englishman for its purchase. As is known by every one who remembers the time of the Raid, all the country storekeepers had then quitted the country for the large towns, leaving their places of business as they stood. Among the number was the owner of the store where this young Englishman worked. He drove away with his wife and family on receipt of the news of the approaching crisis, and left the assistant in charge, with orders, if matters became worse, to also leave everything and make straight for Johannesburg.

The Boers in the vicinity of the shop were well acquainted with the young Englishman, in fact, they used to spend many evenings in his room which was outside at the back of the shop; and it was while passing an evening with them he mentioned that on a given date he would be leaving for Johannesburg. The young Boer boasted that, after hearing this bit of news, he and a friend

waylaid the poor fellow at a certain spot, and he (the speaker) shot him in cold blood, while the other went to get possession of the horse. To show his hearers that his words were true, the young Boer said he would point out the horse to them the following morning. This was certainly a sufficiently unpleasant and blood-curdling story, and it did not say much for my chances in the hands of these men.

I have since often wondered where this poor English fellow came from. He perhaps left a mother and sisters in the far away homeland, who, it may be, were constantly wondering why he did not write to them. They would scarcely think that a terrible fate had befallen their loved one, and that his body has been left to be consumed by vultures and jackals. The facts I have here related are, I am convinced, perfectly true; the tale was not a mere idle yarn, but one that I heard with my own ears from the perpetrator of a gruesome crime. At the time, of course, I was absolutely powerless to further the ends of justice by bringing the murderer to book.

This is only one instance which I am able to record here; but how many crimes of a similar nature have been committed by Boers in the far away districts of the Transvaal and other parts of South Africa? Unquestionably a great many, especially in the Transvaal, where the Boers have always regarded, and always will regard the English as their arch enemies.

After the youth had described his diabolical deed the men made towards the wagon, following their custom, "early to bed, early to rise," &c., and, rolling themselves up in their blankets alongside the fire, were soon fast asleep. I could not sleep, but

dozed in a half-conscious state, and should say it must have been about midnight when I felt a hand laid upon my shoulder, and at the same time heard a whisper: "Be still; all is well." On regaining my scattered senses and recovering from my surprise, I recognised my old friend the commandant, who had crawled on his hands and knees to where I was lying. I felt he was no longer the gruff commandant, but the kind-hearted farmer I had previously known him to be. He whispered: "Listen, and then act," at the same time pressing a large envelope into my hand. He continued, "Your life is in great danger; this note addressed to the commandant of the police, Captain Schutte, contains an order for provisions and other sundries which he must send out to the camp immediately. It is, however, a bogus letter, and you must destroy it by fire on reaching Johannesburg. Your horse will be ready in an hour's time, and a guide will be waiting for you at my wagon. Tie this piece of white rag round your right arm, and if you should come across any patrols, on seeing the white rag they will not shoot you, but will want to know your mission. Show them the address on the envelope, and they will allow you to pass." Having given me these instructions; the old man took my right hand, pressed it for a second, and disappeared into the darkness.

The hour I now had to wait seemed to me to be trebled, and I listened intently for the least noise. At last I was rewarded by hearing a faint step slowly approaching, and some one whispered, "Come." Casting aside my blanket, I noiselessly followed, and found everything as the commandant had told me. My guide was already in the saddle, and I was very soon alongside him, and casting one look back at

the men slumbering underneath the wagons, silently left the camp, and rode forth into the darkness with my companion. I reached Johannesburg without mishap, and was not surprised to find the whole town in a regular fever of excitement. Armed men were to be seen everywhere, and it was not long before I discovered the cause of all this excitement. News had come in that Jameson had surrendered that morning. As soon as I heard this it did not take me long to decide. Although tired out from my long journey, I took a fresh horse from the stables, and rode straight out to the battlefield of Doornkop. As I approached Doornkop a heartrending sight met my gaze. Strewn over the veldt were dead horses, saddles, guns, ammunition, and bandoliers, with here and there a jacket and coat. A few hundred yards from the crest of the hill a body of men were burying the dead. I did not inquire how many were being buried, but I overheard that the grave contained thirteen bodies, the poor fellows being interred just as they were.

There were about forty Boers walking about the veldt carrying rifles, and one young fellow, who entered into conversation with me, informed me that they had ambushed Jameson's party that morning, taking them all prisoners, and that the whole party, escorted by a strong guard of Boers, had left a few hours previously for Pretoria. The Boers whom I saw were very excited and flushed with victory, and judging from their conversation, their idea was that, after delivering up the prisoners to the authorities in Pretoria, they were going to take Johannesburg and burn it to the ground. In the words of one of them who made this suggestion: "We are going to Johannesburg to kill all the

Uitlanders, and after that Jameson and his men are going to be hanged."

The young Boer, whom I have already mentioned, and with whom I had become friendly, must have taken me for a Boer also, as he said to me: "Come, I will show you how we caught this band of robbers." He led the way, and we toiled to the top of Doornkop, where, after resting for a few moments, he detailed to me the whole plan, which had been followed with such brilliant results for his people. Just at the foot of the hill was a steep but narrow hollow, which, from top to bottom, was about twenty to thirty feet deep, and from there there was a general downward slope for a distance of about one mile and a half. From where we stood the Boers had watched Jameson's little force winding its tortuous way through the distant hills, and I will now proceed to give the Boers' version of the encounter, as related to me by my newly-made friend as we stood on the crest of the hill overlooking the field of battle.

He said, "As from that distant hill we watched the band of robbers advancing into the plain below, they were marching in a long line. We knew they would pass near to the hill, keeping on the main road, and so waited until they were within a few hundred yards of where we stood, and then commenced firing. Our men were scattered on both sides of the hill, and there (pointing to the hollow at the foot of the hill) we placed sixteen of our crack-shots, who were well screened by those boulders. Our men numbered about a thousand. We commenced firing, which checked the invaders, who, finding themselves within range, immediately spread out all round the base of the hill, and, taking cover

wherever they could find any, they commenced returning our fire vigorously. But we were too good for them, and their horses being exposed we shot a great number of them. Sir John Willoughby, who was taking the ammunition from one to the other of the first line of fire, was shot at this moment, when, to our surprise, we saw a second body of men coming round a point of the hill. They came along at full gallop, headed by a Maxim gun drawn by four horses. They seemed literally to fly over the ground, and, passing through the first line of men, made straight for the hill. Although we tried to shoot them, they seemed as if they had coats of steel, until they came within three hundred yards, when the first horse fell. This brought the others to a standstill, and a few seconds later the remaining three were flying away riderless. It seemed to us as if the traces had been severed, for there was no time for the men to loosen the harness if they valued their lives. The very next instant the Maxim was raining bullets all round us, which made us sink behind the boulders, and we could scarcely lift our heads owing to the unceasing hail of bullets.

“At that moment a field piece was brought to bear on us a little to our right, and commenced shelling our position, which made us feel more than uncomfortable. Just then the Maxim in front ceased firing, when our sharp-shooters in the hollow commenced firing again, and we on the hill joined in the general fusillade. We now observed a body of horsemen racing towards us in the teeth of our fire. We tried to stop them, but their pace never faltered, and we thought they would never stop. They were yelling and shouting like devils let loose, and they actually came within twenty paces of our

sharp-shooters at the foot of the hill. At that moment, as if by magic, they stopped dead, and wheeling round at the sound of a trumpet, they returned at the same pace in the direction from which they had come. It was while they were wheeling round that they seemed to get mixed up, and it was then that we shot so many of the horses you see lying there. Our general (Cronje), seeing that we had the whole of this force of robbers at the foot of the hill, told us to keep on firing so as to engage their attention, while he despatched a body of his men round the back of the hill so as to cut off their retreat. This succeeded admirably, for about half an hour later we saw our comrades firing from the opposite direction.

“You see,” continued the Boer, “how cunning we were. We knew Jameson would come along the main road past this hill, where we could stop him, and where we could afterwards close the gate of the kraal upon him, as it were. Just as the ox, on finding itself caught in a kraal, looks round to see if there is another gate by which it can escape, so also did Jameson, but all avenues were barred to him. The robbers fought very pluckily indeed, and even we Boers could not help but admire them, fighting as they were against such odds, and remembering that we were on the hill and they in the plain below. When they saw they were actually caught in a trap, they hoisted the white flag, which was a piece of white shirt. My father had seen this small flag hoisted on three previous occasions, and it was always the same colour, white, and shall always remain so in South Africa when Englishman is fighting against Boer.” Considering the frequent and sometimes grossly improper use of the

white flag made by the Boers themselves during their subsequent campaign against the British this boast had better never have been uttered.

When the young Boer had finished speaking, he led the way down the opposite side of the hill towards the main road, where, a little to our right, stood a small farm house. This, he told me, was the place where the English wounded had been laid; and these had, only a few hours previously, been placed on the wagon belonging to the owner of the cottage, and taken with the other prisoners to Pretoria. Turning round on his heel, he pointed to a small stream of water and said—

“You see the edge of that plantation: it was there that one of these Englishmen was shot through his own stupidity. He was one of the first to be wounded, but managed somehow to get as far as this farm house, where he asked for some water to drink. The owner replied that he had none in the house, but told the Englishman that he could fill his bottle at the stream. The man, although wounded, still managed to carry his rifle, and was told that if he went to the stream unarmed he would not be shot at. He did not heed the warning, but took his rifle with him; still, he was allowed to go to the stream and drink without being fired upon. He, however, after drinking, foolishly took cover behind a tree and attempted to snipe our men. A relation of mine had been watching him for some time, and could have shot him long before, but refrained from doing so as the man was wounded. But when he saw him lifting his rifle in order to shoot one of our men, he at once shot him clean through the brain.”

We went into the cottage, and I was introduced to the old gentleman we had just been talking about,

and he corroborated the young Boer's story. We then returned to the field, and I picked up a few articles as curiosities, among them a broken Lee-Metford carbine, which I now have in my collection. The carbine is numbered 421, and should the person who used the weapon bearing this number ever read these lines, I shall at least be most happy to make his acquaintance. What hurt the Boers most when Jameson surrendered was the fact that many of the prisoners had smashed their rifles, which were nearly all of the Lee-Metford type, and the first of this make to be used in South Africa.

I took leave of my young Boer acquaintance, and reached Johannesburg late that night. The feeling in the city was very acute. Crowds of men were marching up and down the principal streets, and at one time the position was certainly very critical, especially in front of the Goldfields' Offices, where the members of the Reform Committee were residing. The crowd clamoured for news of Jameson, and some of the principal leaders of the Reform Committee addressed the people, and tried to pacify them. But it was all to no purpose. Finding that they could get no information from the Committee, the mob made a rush for the Post Office, with the intention of wrecking it. Thanks, however, to the prompt action of Colonel Bettington, who succeeded in dispersing the mob, the building was saved from destruction.

It was not until the early hours of the next morning that the crowds began to diminish. During the day the news spread like wild-fire that Jameson had been captured, together with all his men, and the crowds, to a man, would have marched straight to Pretoria to effect his rescue, had they

been able to obtain arms. But Johannesburg at that time was between the devil and the deep sea. Its would-be rescuers had been captured, the town itself was surrounded by Boers, and it was expected every moment that it would be shelled from the jail built on the hill overlooking the town.

It is needless for me to attempt further description of this troublous time. As every one knows, Sir Hercules Robinson came to the rescue, and so saved the lives of hundreds of defenceless Uitlanders from the Boers, and it was only with a firm hand that General Joubert was able to keep his men from carrying out their original intention of burning Johannesburg to the ground.

So many versions of this affair have been placed before the public that I have hesitated before giving the present; but as most of those accounts were circulated by people who never saw Johannesburg, and who certainly were not there during the raid, I have at this stage, and now that rancour has subsided, thought it not amiss to place the true facts before the public, freed from the many misleading statements which have been made by various persons influenced by political or personal reasons.

Regarding the number of killed in this unfortunate affair, the point has been largely and vigorously debated. My own information comes from the very best authority—the total number of killed on the Boer side was fourteen, and on the Raider's side, forty-four.

Another question which has raised much discussion, is whether the Transvaal Government knew some time beforehand of the approaching Raid, or whether it was in ignorance of it till well-nigh the last moment. I unhesitatingly assert

that President Kruger knew of the doings of the Reform Committee long beforehand, and that there was a traitor or traitors in the Reformers' camp. Many will remember his utterance made in the course of one of his remarkable speeches, wherein he significantly remarked: "I shall wait until the tortoise pushes its head out from underneath its shell, and then I shall cut it off." This remark caused some uneasiness at the time, though most people regarded it as a general rather than a specific threat arising from the special circumstances of the moment.

Jameson, who was stationed at Pitsani, just over the border, in Bechuanaland, was to have been ready on the 6th of January, 1896, which was the day, according to Leonard's Manifesto, on which the Uitlanders were going to demand their rights, and Jameson was to be prepared to march, *in case he should be wanted*, to help his countrymen in Johannesburg, who had for so long been under the thumb of the Boer clique at Pretoria. The Uitlanders, as all men know, had made the Transvaal one of the richest countries in the world; and the Boer Government had been amassing an enormous revenue and large private fortunes as the result of the enterprise and industry of the sorely oppressed Uitlanders. The Boer nation, had, in fact, managed to raise itself from a state of penury to extraordinary prosperity through the enterprise and untiring industry of the hated and despised Uitlanders, who were deprived of all political and most civil rights; and it was not likely that such a state of affairs could last. Had not the Uitlanders demanded their rights times and again and been refused? This, however, was going to be the last time they would

ask, and they were resolved, if necessary, on using force.

There is very little left for me to say. Still, I hope the reader will not regard these details and reflections, penned now some years ago, as unduly belated. Dr. Jameson, together with his chief, the late Cecil Rhodes, have been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented with regard to their part in the affair of which I now speak. Posterity, however, will do them justice, and will recognise that it was sincere patriotism and a burning hatred of the gross oppression of their fellow-countrymen that actuated them throughout, and not sordid personal motives. President Kruger well knew that while the great Imperialist held power—and his power was then increasing—the chances of a future united South Africa under the Dutch flag were very small, and that he must by some means manage to overthrow his powerful adversary. Kruger's scheme to wreck the great statesman, his adversary, was deeply laid, and at first entirely successful.

The despatch had been drawn up by the Reform Committee, requesting Jameson's help; and this was ready to be forwarded to the Doctor should circumstances make it necessary. The despatch was not to be sent, however, unless the lives of Britishers were actually in danger. This precious document had been written and signed days before the 6th of January, and had been secretly placed in the inside of a bicycle frame. This bicycle was guarded in the office of the Reform Committee, and a well-known cyclist had been engaged, and was kept in readiness, to ride off with the precious document at a moment's notice. Now comes the moot point, as some regard it: was this bicycle stolen and

replaced by another exactly similar, or was it not? At any rate, in some mysterious manner, a cyclist was stopped by a Boer patrol on the morning of the 1st day of January, the bicycle was smashed, the document was found and read, after which another bicycle was given to the cyclist, and he was told to go on to his destination, which was the camp of Dr. Jameson, then at Pitsani.

On the morning of the 2nd of January, while the Reform Leaders were holding a meeting, a cyclist, who knew the password, got through the guarded door, and succeeded in entering the office of the Committee during their deliberations. There was naturally much confusion, as the cyclist, without any warning, burst in upon them, exclaimed: "We are betrayed; we have a traitor in the camp!" and as he said this, he pointed with his finger at Mr. S—— J——. As can be imagined, it was as if a thunderbolt had fallen among them, and the excitement was increased when the cyclist continued: "Jameson has crossed the Border, and is marching towards Johannesburg."

The feeling was intense. To stop Jameson was out of the question, as the telegraph wires were broken. To meet him on horseback was equally out of the question. What the document conveyed to the Doctor actually contained very few ever knew. But he did come in with only four hundred men, and was opposed at different points by about two thousand Boers.

The remarkable incident of the shooting of Wolf Joel at his office desk in mistake for his brother some months afterwards, and the trial and acquittal of the murderer, who was taken red-handed, are very significant, followed, as these incidents were

shortly afterwards, by the death, from drowning, of Mr. Barney Barnato.

It has been a question often discussed, "Was Barnato thrown into the sea, or did he jump overboard?" One may at least wonder if the death of these two gentlemen was in any way connected with the Jameson Raid, and if some of the financiers did play Mr. Rhodes false; and whether, moreover, they were working with the idea of federating the South African Colonies under the British flag or not? It would appear to some that certain members of the house of Barnato, as it was then constituted, although outwardly loyal to the cause of Reform, did not hold the same views as the great Imperialist with regard to the political situation and the resultant movement.

It has often been said that we should let the past be buried with regard to the Jameson Raid; but when writing on South African affairs, especially on what has actually taken place during the last few years, the Raid cannot be easily overlooked by one who had his own exciting and disagreeable experiences through those stormy days. After events have proved that this episode had a beneficial result, in that it served to draw the forcible attention of the British Government and people to the fact that South Africa was in danger of becoming a great Dutch Republic and that the Uitlanders were to be swept out of the country. But had this been realised earlier there would have been no Boer War.

Something had to be done to call the attention of British statesmen to what was passing. I do not honestly believe that it was with Mr. Rhodes's sanction Dr. Jameson entered the Transvaal when he did, as he had only placed a small body of men

on the Border in case of emergency. On the contrary, it is tolerably certain Dr. Jameson acted on his own impulse, and thereby upset his chief's "apple-cart," as the great statesman remarked in his own expressive words. If Dr. Jameson had been successful, he would have been forgiven for his rash act; but having failed, every one blamed him, and he paid dearly for his mistake.

After this affair was settled, I decided to leave Johannesburg, but before doing so I rode out to see my old friend the commandant, whom I found with his family, quite well and hearty, on his farm, some three hours' ride from Johannesburg. It is needless to say that he did not receive me in the same manner as at the laager. Nor did he speak in any sort of self-praise of having saved my life at the time, though he gave me to understand that the majority were against him, and that the following morning I was to be shot as a spy.

However, we did not dwell very long on these and other political matters; our old friendship was at once resumed, and I spent a good and well-earned two days' holiday on his splendid farm. We parted with deep regret. He would not allow me to ride to town, but spanned in his favourite team, and drove me to the station.

I then left the Transvaal to take up my abode in Cape Colony.

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